Independent Evaluation: The DEC Response to the Earthquake in Gujarat

January – October 2001

VOLUME ONE

Executive Summary

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CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

Executive Summary

VOLUME TWO

Full Evaluation Report

Map

Acronyms

CONTENTS

1 Introduction
- 1.1 Earthquakes in India
- 1.2 Social consequences
- 1.3 The DEC Response
- 1.4 Methodology of the evaluation

2 The affected area

3 The Red Cross Code
- 1 The humanitarian imperative
- 2 Aid without discrimination
- 3 Religion and politics
- 4 Freedom from external government influence
- 5 Respect for culture and custom
- 6 Building on local capacities
- 7 Involving beneficiaries
- 8 Reducing future vulnerabilities
- 9 Accountability
- 10 Respect for dignity in images

4 Conclusions

5 Summary of learning points

Appendices
Financial Summary
The Red Cross Code of Conduct
The Evaluation Team
Schedule and persons consulted (outside DEC)
Terms of Reference
Bibliography

VOLUME THREE

Sector Reports

1 Public opinion research: methodology and findings
Sarah Routley

2 Shelter Issues
Kirtee Shah

3 Financial Management
Alex Jacobs

4 Review of the Sphere Standards and Indicators
Hugh Goyder

Executive summary

Tony Vaux, *Team Leader*

Introduction: The evaluation process

1 This evaluation results from a collaboration between eight specialists from three organisations based in India and the UK (for names and background see Appendix Four). The DEC requested the team to focus on targeting, shelter and financial management. The team proposed to use the Red Cross Code[1] as an accepted set of values against which the response could be measured, and a public opinion survey as a way to reflect the views of the affected people and gain insights into the process of targeting. This survey eventually covered 50 villages and interviews with over 2,300 people – far more than previously covered by the DEC[2] and a unique feature of this evaluation.

2 Each DEC agency in the field[3] was asked to make its own self-assessment against Sphere Standards and the Red Cross Code. The evaluators aimed for a continuous and interactive process, feeding back comments and suggestions during the course of the evaluation. The report is based on three sets of visits in Gujarat and Delhi between March and October 2001.

3 In this evaluation we review the total response of the DEC rather than the performance of the individual members. Where requested to do so we have fed back comments to individual agencies verbally. This Executive Summary focuses on issues arising for the DEC. The Full Report assesses the general response against the ten principles of the Red Cross Code, bringing out issues and lessons for the practice of disaster response. There are four additional reports on specific sectors: public opinion research, shelter, financial management and Sphere Standards.

Overview

4 The people affected by the earthquake have received substantial and timely assistance. After the initial loss of life, very few further lives were lost through secondary effects such as disease, hunger, cold or thirst. Programmes are in progress to restore shelter and livelihoods to levels existing before the earthquake and in some cases with improvements. In terms of relief, the global response was a success. There was a considerable level of satisfaction expressed by those affected and little sign that dependency had been created.

5 The contribution of the international community, including the British Government and the DEC members, has been large compared with other disasters, but very small compared with the response of the Government of India (with support from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank). Respectively the contributions of British Government, DEC and Indian

1 Members of the DEC must be signatories to the Code. Its full name is 'The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes' see www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code The full text is printed as Appendix Two.

2 Compare 61 people interviewed in the Mozambique evaluation.

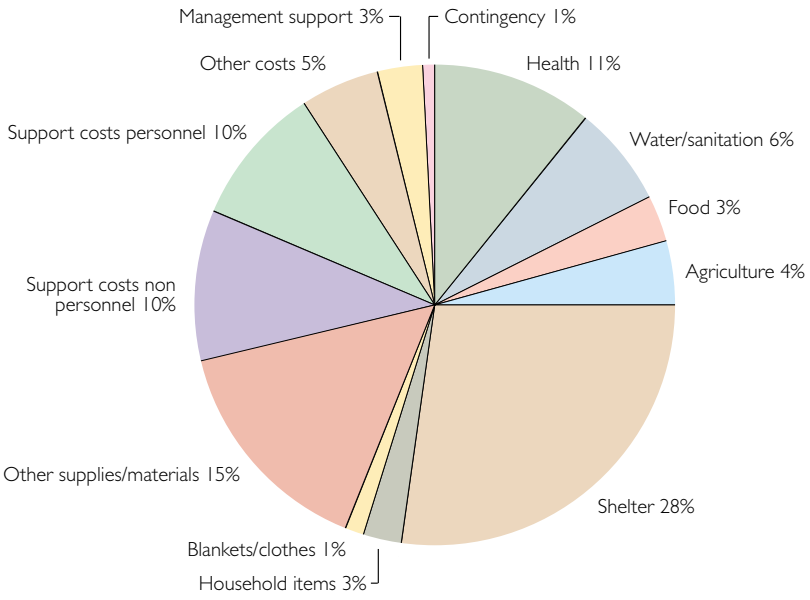
3 We distinguish between the UK-based DEC members and their representatives in India, referred to as agencies.

Government are £10m, £24m[4] and over £1bn. This disparity became more important in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phases – and one that few DEC agencies sufficiently recognised.

6 Even in the relief phase far more people were rescued or assisted by neighbours, government staff and military personnel than by the high profile external search-and-rescue teams and aid agencies. The DEC's role was not in saving lives. DEC members have ameliorated the suffering and economic loss but could have achieved more impact, especially in the rehabilitation phase. In some cases they substituted for government responses and in others missed the opportunity to influence government by mobilising and representing the affected people.

7 DEC members could have developed more effective local partnerships and thereby achieved greater impact. Some members recognised this, while others struggled unnecessarily in the attempt to run their own programmes. More should have been done to increase local capacities and reduce future vulnerabilities as required under the Red Cross Code.

Use of DEC Funds: Programme and Support Activities
DEC Gujarat Appeal, as at 31st October 2001



4 £19m through DEC and £5m through individual agencies.

PART ONE The response

1.1 The relief phase

8 Overall the DEC response in the relief phase has been satisfactory, with a pre-eminent role for the Red Cross movement, and notably efficient work by Tearfund and World Vision. But overall, too many relief goods were imported, there were unnecessary relief flights and expatriates were employed where local staff and organizations would have been more effective and efficient. The short deployment periods of expatriate staff and their limited understanding of the area led to some mistakes in targeting.

1.2 Targeting

9 **Geographical spread.** In the initial rush of relief responses – local, national and international – there was considerable duplication both in assessment and distribution. Some agencies over-purchased relief materials and continued to distribute them long after they were required – and even after being requested to stop by government. DEC agencies neglected urban areas. Areas further from the epicentre, with less spectacular damage, received disproportionately less assistance, but Concern and Christian Aid among DEC agencies – and to some extent the British Red Cross Society – specifically addressed this issue.

10 **Social discrimination**. Our public opinion research reveals serious public concern about discrimination along lines of caste and to a lesser extent religion (exclusion of Moslems, bias to Christians) and gender (notably legal rights of widows). Some local NGOs are strongly linked to specific caste groups. Where DEC agencies were insufficiently aware of this, they could be 'captured'. This resulted in aid being distributed according to caste, rather than need as required by the Red Cross Code.

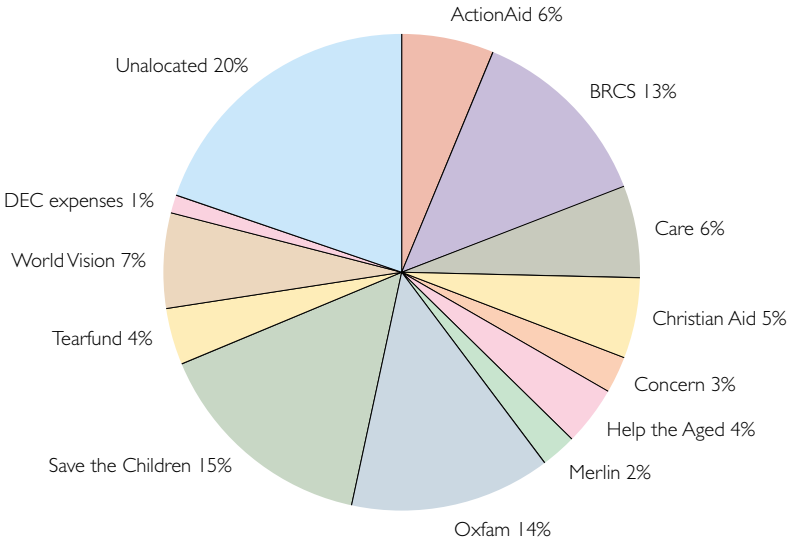
11 **Gender**. Few examples exist of serious gender analysis or consultation with women by DEC agencies. Our public opinion survey indicates that women felt that they had often been excluded from discussions about the design of projects and that, where consulted, their views had been ignored. ActionAid was a notable exception in this respect.

12 **Age**. Positive work was done by HelpAge India not only to assist old people but also to draw the attention of other agencies and government to this issue.

13 **Disability**. Despite the fact that the earthquake caused an increase in numbers of disabled persons, DEC agencies have not given this issue any significant level of attention. There is a strong case for introducing the community-based rehabilitation approach, and because it is an area in which government lacks policy, a clear need for NGOs to do so.

14 **General**. Unless mediated by democratic processes and civil society there is an inevitable tendency for government inputs, especially in the heat of disasters, to benefit the better off rather than the most needy. There has been insufficient recognition of this problem. DEC agencies have done reasonably well in making their own response consistent with the Red Cross principle of non-discrimination but have generally ignored the wider picture. They could have played a much greater role as intermediaries, most notably in ensuring that compensation for destroyed houses was equitably distributed. As a result the overall effect of the disaster is likely to be that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.

Split of DEC funds between Member Agencies
DEC Gujarat Earthquake Appeal, as at 31st October 2001



1.3 Rehabilitation

15 **General**. There were deficiencies in planning and strategy. Some agencies lingered for too long in relief while others rushed into ill-conceived reconstruction projects that gave limited scope for the affected people to exercise their own choices. Few agencies made a strategic review at the crucial point when turning from relief to rehabilitation.

16 The rehabilitation response has varied greatly between DEC agencies, and with widely differing levels of effectiveness. Bearing in mind the specific context of this disaster, the focus should have been more firmly on self-help housing, livelihoods, and advocacy - especially to prevent the exclusion of the most vulnerable people.

17 The DEC could have achieved more if agencies had engaged more effectively with local NGOs. Gujarat has a strong tradition of NGOs, yet several DEC members – even those with strong connections in the area – operated through their own staff and relied unnecessarily and inefficiently, on expatriates. In some cases local partners were ignored, and in others a climate of suspicion and distrust developed.

18 The failure to make best use of local partners was a primary cause of a mismatch that developed in the DEC between the large amount of funds available and the capacity of DEC agencies to scale up. In some cases the objective of disbursing funds took precedence over the assessment of need and opportunity. In that respect the response did not meet the first and fundamental requirement of the Red Cross Code that 'The humanitarian imperative comes first'.

19 On the other hand a number of agencies assessed the situation accurately, drew on lessons from previous responses, and positioned themselves to maximize the effectiveness of funds donated by the British public. Among those that deserve special praise are ActionAid and Help the Aged. Save the Children (SCF) played an innovative role in temporary shelter. Significantly, all these successes were based on strong local partnerships. In the

rehabilitation phase it can be said that the stronger the local partnership[5] the greater the impact. The key to success for DEC members was working with others (see 1.5 below).

20 **Livelihoods**. Typical activities in this field are provision of tools and training to artisans. The impact on sustainable livelihoods remains uncertain at this stage. More could have been done to address the transformation of traditional crafts that has become necessary because of the increasing effects of globalisation. Blacksmiths, block-printers and embroiderers are no longer supplying a captive local demand but competing in global markets. But the main issue is that the DEC could have done more in the livelihoods sector. The needs are enormous. Agencies should have interacted more closely with Government to ensure that its massive interventions in this sector benefit from their experience and do not duplicate what they have already done[6]. Nevertheless there was a great deal of good practice in the sector. CARE's work through local partners deserves particular credit.

21 **Water-harvesting.** Agencies have been forced into a trade off between speed and quality in relation to this issue. The problem was whether to build as many structures as possible or to ensure the greatest community mobilisation. The Red Cross and World Vision favoured speed, but their approach entailed mechanised solutions, use of contractors and low levels of community interaction. By contrast the approach of CARE's partners, although smaller in scale, has spread the benefits more widely through manual labour and led to a greater likelihood of long-term maintenance. But the number of projects is smaller. Using Red Cross Principles the latter approach has the greater merit –although it is not an easy choice. The real test will be to evaluate the impact in a few years' time.

1.4 Shelter and reconstruction

22 **Temporary Housing.** With the exception of SCF, CAFOD/Caritas and Christian Aid through their local partners, DEC members did not sufficiently address the urgent need for temporary housing and the huge potential for NGO involvement in that sector. Despite strong lessons from the Latur earthquake[7] and prompting from the DEC Secretariat following the March monitoring visit, agencies decided to concentrate on permanent housing.

23 **Seismic safety**. Agencies found it difficult to balance the principle of seismic safety with respect for the owner's wishes and financial position. The added cost of seismic safety features is substantial. This makes it essential to obtain the full compensation package from government. Agencies underestimated the real costs of seismic safety and were too inclined to provide a few small inputs instead of tackling the underlying issue of government response by spread of information, group mobilisation and advocacy. Some owners, obliged by DEC donors to follow seismic safety but given inadequate resources to do so, will fall into debt. Others have rejected DEC agency inputs where they were considered disproportionate to the total costs.

24 **Construction training.** A main focus of DEC agencies has been on training masons. But without follow-up it remains uncertain whether such training makes any real difference to employment or implementation of seismic safety. If DEC agencies are involved in training they should monitor and assess the impact.

5 This includes national organizations representing DEC members.
6 State Government officials said that they had not received information from any private international agency.
7 Maharashtra, India in 1973.

25 **Permanent Housing.**
Drawing on the experience from the Latur earthquake of 1973, the Government rightly placed the emphasis on informal reconstruction by the owners rather than formal village plans and reconstruction by contractors. Over 95% of house reconstruction was left to the owners. DEC agencies disproportionately focused on a few cases of village 'adoption'. As in the case of the Latur earthquake, it has proved difficult to manage the competing demands for community participation, government approval and aid agency agendas.

26 In the view of our shelter consultant, the results in terms of new settlements have been poor, particularly in responsiveness to individual needs, and recognition of the essential functions of housing in relation to livelihoods. The process involves a skewing of DEC resources towards the tiny number[8] of beneficiaries of these projects. It seems likely that many of these houses will not be used by the owners and may end up as 'second homes'[9]. This suggests a serious problem in relation to organisational learning.

27 **Employment**. A further criticism of these housing projects is that they generated a huge amount of employment but virtually none of it has gone to local people. Instead, contractors have brought in migrant labour. This problem should have been avoided from the start by insisting on the use of local labour (as SCF has done). The appalling conditions of migrant labourers are a human rights issue[10] for which agencies involved in housing should take more responsibility.

28 **Public buildings.** DEC members (notably SCF, Merlin and British Red Cross) have allocated considerable sums to the reconstruction of pre-schools and health centres. The government would have rebuilt the centres anyway, although perhaps more slowly and to a lower standard (but probably at lower cost too).

29 In the case of SCF, the pre-school project is part of a long-term policy in India under which important work is being done to strengthen and improve the government's Integrated Child Development Services programme. From the perspective of 'the DEC donor' it might still seem questionable that funds were used in order to 'buy' influence in such a long-term programme rather than directly help the survivors of the earthquake. But the involvement may be justified under the Red Cross Code in terms of building long-term capacity and reducing future vulnerability. This is an example where more explicit use of the Code by the DEC would give the public a better idea of what they were contributing to.

30 Merlin has no intention of staying on in Gujarat, and has already handed over the buildings to government. Given their lack of experience in India and the expense of establishing offices for a short period it is questionable whether Merlin should have participated in the response. The best justification is that the buildings they have constructed are of a very high standard (but expensive). The British Red Cross input includes employment of social workers, but the evolution of a long-term programme in pre-schools will be limited by the capacity of the Gujarat Red Cross. With both Merlin and British Red Cross it is not easy to justify the substitution of DEC funds for government funding.

8 Currently estimated at 4.5% of the total.
9 Alternatives were available. The local NGOs Abhiyan, Navsarjan and Unnati (with support from DEC members) have supported owner-driven reconstruction by providing technical support, materials and help with getting government compensation.
10 Notably violations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

31 More justifiable is support to community centres through Christian Aid's partner VHAI. This was praised by people in our survey on the basis that the centres would not be provided by government and are seen to strengthen local capacity to deal with future disasters.

32 **Conclusion**. It should be a general principle of the DEC that funds should not substitute for government action unless there is clear justification in terms of longer-term involvements in capacity building and reduction of vulnerability.

1.5 Working with others

33 **Working with the people.** Our opinion survey reveals a disturbing level of dissatisfaction about consultation and transparency. In many cases people felt that they were only consulted about plans that had already been made. Similarly, participation was seen as a symbolic requirement to comply with agency policies.

34 **Working with local NGOs.** There has been much debate about the ability of local organisations to scale up. Despite strong views to the contrary by expatriate aid managers, the view of the evaluators is that the record of NGOs in Gujarat is outstanding and that the doubts and fears of DEC agencies have been much exaggerated by preconceptions brought from elsewhere. As a result of this, inputs to local NGOs were sometimes less than the scale of need required. Attempts to scale-up using expatriate staff have diverted attention and resources and more could have been done to increase the capacity of local NGOs. Crucial needs such as temporary housing and livelihood support have been under-funded. The possibility of insurance against the effect of future disasters through local organisations has been taken up only in a small way (by CARE). The root cause of this is probably that strategic decisions were taken without adequate understanding of India, and of Gujarat in particular.

35 **Working with government.** DEC members have stressed the difficult working context of Gujarat, notably the tribulations of working with government. They experienced long delays in the finalisation of plans for public buildings and confusion between different levels of government. While acknowledging that this made matters very difficult for DEC Programme Managers, it should also be recognised that this is a normal characteristic of working with government, especially in India where the checks and balances of a democratic (and bureaucratic) system do not allow foreign organisations to do exactly as they wish. In general the government worked much more effectively in Gujarat than in the Latur earthquake in Maharashtra. Much of the problem was generated by the DEC itself in the form of unrealistic timescales.

PART TWO: The functioning of the DEC

2.1 General accountability

36 The accountancy side of financial management has been generally good. Our local accountant examined the books of most member agencies in Gujarat and a representative sample of partners, and found overall a high standard. The DEC can be reasonably certain that funds raised in the UK can be tracked through to end-use. Oxfam GB was particularly good in this respect.

37 The problems arise at a more strategic level. DEC members did not all strike a proper balance between the availability of funds, their strategic role and their local capacities. Unable to match funds with capacity, the response of many of the DEC members became 'fund-driven' rather than 'need-driven'. Taking funds from many sources before proper plans had been drawn up, they became victims of their organisations' fundraising success. There was an uncritical acceptance that the more funding the better the result. Managers on the ground began to see their task as spending money within the DEC time-scale rather than planning good programmes. They held a meeting in Gujarat and questioned the DEC time-scale. But at the same time, some members (notably Help the Aged) needed more funds and many local NGOs felt that their capacity was not fully used. Overall, funds were not used as effectively as they might have been.

2.2 Changes in the funding context.

38 **DFID and ECHO.** DFID intervenes in the same disasters as the DEC and expects that a selected group of DEC members will act as its partners. The situation in Gujarat was exacerbated further by similar policies on the part of ECHO. As DFID insisted that the funds for the January earthquake must be used by the end of March, those members scarcely touched DEC funds during the relief phase. It seems reasonable to suggest that a member participating in an appeal should have an immediate need for funds, including funding for relief purposes.

39 There is an underlying problem that funds are skewed disproportionately towards situations of high media profile rather than actual need. The ideal solution would be for the DEC to persuade DFID and ECHO to retain their funds for situations with less media coverage where a public appeal has not taken place. If that is not realistic, the DEC should reconsider the way in which it allocates funds between members.

2.3 Allocation of funds within the DEC

40 The allocation of funds within the DEC agencies is determined by the Indicator of Capacity (IOC) mechanism. Each agency receives a percentage of the total Appeal funds based on a calculation of its global capacity. This mechanism is not adjusted for different disasters but in the Gujarat case there was an obvious mismatch between shares and capacity. Organisations with huge ongoing operations in India were quickly and efficiently able to launch substantial programmes in excess of the 'share' that had been laid down on a global scale.

41 In Gujarat the DEC's system of allocating funds between members would have caused even more serious problems if it had not been for the overall generosity of the public responding to the Appeal. There were enough funds to cover the DEC's inefficient internal allocations.

42 Despite being in the process of massive changes that greatly reduced its capacity to respond, Oxfam GB took the maximum funds from the DEC as well as from DFID and ECHO. By June it was evident that Oxfam could not spend the funds and over £2.6million -14% of the total income to the DEC and more than half of what Oxfam had requested- was returned. The evaluators have been unable to find any evidence that Oxfam weighed up the situation or considered its responsibility to the DEC as a whole. According to Oxfam's internal evaluation, it was simply assumed that Oxfam would take maximum funding.

43 Arguably, the funds that Oxfam held back during the relief phase could have been more efficiently used by other members. At least one DEC member (Help the Aged) was actively seeking more funds. The DEC system of allocating funds between members could have badly undermined the relief effort, leaving those in dire need without help. Luckily, in Gujarat the effect was reduced by the scale of donations. Next time the problem could be serious.

44 The point illustrates the fact that most DEC members pursue their own interests rather than those of the collective group, or the public donor. Staff of DEC members view the DEC as little more than a fundraising mechanism, and are wary of any attempt by the DEC to take on a wider role. The fear that the DEC might become a grant-making body is often used to prevent any progress towards collective action.

45 No-one outside a member agency really knows what its capacity for response is likely to be. The DEC Secretariat cannot impose its own judgments. Some members carefully consider their capacity and decide to take less than their full share, or in CAFOD's case not to participate at all. Others do not consider the issue at all. The solution should be to establish a common procedure. The Chief Executive should be empowered to question such decisions against the agreed framework (testing whether the full procedure has been followed – not questioning the judgments), and to report back to the Board on any cases where there is not full agreement.

11 Although the stated norm is 6 months with a maximum of 9 months, recent practice has been to declare a 9-month period from the start.

2.4 The DEC timescale

46 The DEC's nine-month timescale[11] has been a source of considerable frustration to managers and planners in the field. It is much longer than the relief phase but too short for most rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. In Gujarat, as in other recent emergencies, the problem has been covered over by allowing a nine-month 'closing down' period.

47 In Gujarat, some managers in DEC head offices suspected from the outset that there would be an 'extension' and planned accordingly. But for managers in the field uncertainty about the extension had a severe effect on programme planning and implementation. This caused severe inefficiencies. Levels of participation and consultation in house construction projects were adversely affected. Livelihood projects were curtailed.

48 Poor communications compounded the problem. Even after the Chief Executive's letter in June (sent to head offices but not found in many field offices) field managers remained uncertain about the situation as late as the October visit of the evaluation team. The message was not being passed on. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the process itself, the result was confusion in the field and haste to complete projects which really needed more time. As a result there was some loss of quality of projects in relation to Red Cross Code principles.

49 By allowing a further nine-month period for 'closing down' the Chief Executive found a formula which allowed members to spend DEC funds, but only by a necessary 'fudge'. Few outsiders would have expected 'closing down' to take as long as the actual operation, nor that the same amount of funds would be used for 'closing down' as for the rest of the response. The DEC had no choice, but the process has tended to penalise those managers who planned according to the stated rules at the outset and it has rewarded those who gambled on the likelihood of an extension (or used their influence to bring it about).

50 We suggest that the solution to these various problems is to have an 18-month period as the norm but specify that within that period members will be expected to use twice as much in the first half as in the second, so that the second part is more genuinely closing down and that immediate relief needs are likely to be met before other possibilities are considered. The Chief Executive should have the right to question significant variations to the agreed framework and proactively encourage transfers of funds between agencies in order to maximise overall efficiency. This could be done as a continuous process.

51 **Impact on strategy.** With all the uncertainties about timescales and funding levels, many agencies missed the crucial opportunity to re-orientate their strategy at the point of moving forward from relief to rehabilitation. In some agencies issues such as advocacy and social mobilisation were ignored simply because they would not lead to what had become, for some managers at least, an over-riding objective – spending the funds..

52 This was a self-inflicted problem. By making a more honest appraisal of capacity at the start, by better learning of lessons from the past, and by more openness to work constructively with others DEC members could have avoided these problems.

53 **DEC planning procedures.** This lack of strategy was compounded by problems arising from the DEC's internal procedures. The current requirement for a 6-month plan at the end of four weeks is unrealistic. It obliges aid managers to make decisions before they can make a strategic appraisal. Having drawn up the plan, the necessary strategic appraisal may seem irrelevant and does not take place. It causes a tendency for such plans to be drawn up in head offices, even by fundraisers, away from the field. Instead we suggest that plans are drawn up at the end of 6 weeks and that these plans must cover an agreed list of topics as part of a standardised DEC assessment process.

2.5 Information management

54 Information and Co-ordination. The forum of DEC agencies set up by Oxfam and SCF, and enthusiastically supported by SCF's Programme Manager, played an important and positive role in the exchange of information between DEC members and, on at least two occasions, as a channel through which issues could be mediated between field offices and head offices. Because other co-ordination mechanisms were not working effectively, SCF tried hard to assemble a collective database but by the time it began to work other databases had finally been established.

55 The process demonstrates a clear need for information management by the DEC during the relief phase of the emergency and particularly in the first weeks. In future we suggest that the DEC should send a liaison officer familiar with DEC rules and procedures to be present in the first weeks of a disaster up to the preparation of 6-week plans with a role focused on information management.

56 **DEC communications.** Communication from the DEC, especially about the issue of time-scales, should have been more comprehensive to give better guidance to field managers. There was some confusion among DEC members, and particularly staff on the ground, about the limits to the use of Appeal funds, especially in relation to livelihoods.

2.6 Other issues

57 **Use of the Red Cross Code.** All DEC members are signatories to the Code[12] but none used it actively during the emergency, and many field managers were unfamiliar with it. The Red Cross Code can be used effectively in evaluation as a measure of quality. In the full report we take each Principle in turn, focus on key issues (as far as possible those specified in the terms of reference) and then examine performance against the Principle. We are able to show which Principles require more attention and thus focus attention on learning. In this case the Principles relating to building local capacities and reducing future vulnerabilities were highlighted –with the proviso that some agencies were following the Code much more than others.

58 The Code could also be used in programme planning but in order to do so we suggest that the DEC should develop indicators for compliance with the Code. These could be particularly useful in relation to accountability/transparency and dignity (Principles Nine and Ten).

59 **Transparency.** One of the most challenging principles in the Code is the requirement to be accountable both to the people in need and to those who give funds. The DEC deserves much credit for its policy of publishing evaluations. It is also planned that the opinion survey will be published in English, Gujarati and Hindi. But we detected a tendency amongst some aid agency staff in the UK to regard public sympathy as a commodity to be exploited rather than a perception to be developed. Similarly in the field, DEC members (with the exception of ActionAid) did very little to make their activities and policies known in their areas of operation. DEC members can scarcely begin to be accountable if they are not transparent.

12 It is a condition of membership.

60 **Dignity.** The DEC has neglected its obligation under the Red Cross Code to emphasise the dignity of those it helps. The image of an old man with hands raised in supplication used in the original appeal and the 'Thank-you' parade in the Nick Ross follow-up film were not examples of best practice.

61 **Sphere Standards.** Despite many references to their use, there was confusion about the application of Sphere Standards and Indicators, and they were not used in a meaningful way in this emergency. This is not simply the view of the evaluators. DEC field managers also concluded that Sphere Indicators, in particular, have as yet been too focused on situations where there is little or no local capacity. Members should consider carefully whether Sphere Indicators should be formally limited to specific types of emergency, adapted to cover situations such as Gujarat, or issued with explicit cautionary qualifications. The evaluation found that Sphere Standards had not led to a satisfactory level of assessment. Members may wish to consider whether Sphere can be used to improve levels of assessment.

PART THREE: General conclusion

62 Measuring performance against the Red Cross Code we would assign the following scores (points out of ten) for the total DEC response, with the proviso that there were huge disparities between DEC members –

1	Humanitarian imperative comes first.	5
2	Aid is given regardless of race etc.	8
3	Religion and Politics	9
4	Independence from government policy	*not applicable*
5	Culture and Custom	6
6	Build on local capacities	5
7	Involve beneficiaries	4
8	Reduce future vulnerabilities	3
9	Accountable to beneficiaries	6
	Ditto to donors	8
10	Dignity in images	5
	Total	**59**

63 Dividing the total by ten (ten criteria) this gives an overall rating for the DEC response of 5.9 for this disaster. The figure could be used to compare with DEC responses to other disasters, or those of other agencies.

PART FOUR: Recommendations

DEC members should –

- Ensure that consultation with the affected people can be integrated into planning rather than follow afterwards.
- Review their assessment procedures to ensure that the wider context is considered and that assessment feeds into the process of strategic review.
- Ensure that major lessons from previous disasters cannot be ignored.
- Recognise that local partnerships are likely to be more effective than external interventions.
- Recognise that the key to scaling up is not internal expansion but finding ways to work effectively with others.
- Use the Red Cross Code as a quality standard in programme planning.
- Develop indicators of good practice in relation to Red Cross Code Principles.
- Develop policies and procedures around the issue of transparency.
- Recognise the rights of public donors to expect collective responsibility for the efficient use of funds, and to have their understanding deepened.

The DEC should –

- Establish a timescale for Appeals of 18 months divided into two 9-month phases in which twice as much would be spent in the first phase as in the second.
- Regard the IOC mechanism only as a starting point for a self-assessment process which will be signed-off by senior managers.
- Establish the rules for such a procedure and empower the Chief Executive to monitor the process against the rules.
- Develop an information management strategy, drawing on lessons from previous emergencies.
- Field a Liaison Officer at the outset of an Appeal with a brief for information management.
- Continue to encourage a forum of DEC agencies in the field, as happened in Gujarat.
- Develop a wide mailing list in each disaster to ensure that facts such as decisions, procedures and rules are communicated directly to all concerned including programme partners.
- Replace four-week plans with six-week plans and ensure that these are strategic by establishing an appropriate list of headings.
- Proactively use the Red Cross Code as a test of quality.
- Consider the implications of the Gujarat experience for Sphere.
- Pay more attention to images (Red Cross Code Principle Nine) and focus on this in a future evaluation.

PART FIVE: Main learning points.

Earthquakes

- Earthquakes do not necessarily disrupt communications and trade.
- The unpredictability of earthquakes means that there is no easy prescription for seismic safety.
- Permanent reconstruction takes longer than the time in which people can reasonably be expected to live in tents: temporary housing is an important and neglected sector.
- Like other disasters, earthquakes may tend to make the poor poorer unless corrective steps are taken.

Preparedness

- Preparedness was viewed by the affected people as being about partnerships and knowledge rather than stocks and skills.
- Partnerships with local NGOs are the best means for external aid agencies to scale up.
- Where such partnerships have been developed there will be an expectation that they will continue in time of disaster.

Response

- Evaluations will continue to question whether agencies allow the desire for publicity and existence of emergency stocks to outweigh humanitarian principles –and therefore agencies should take extra care in making decisions open to such an interpretation.
- Every aid agency should make a full strategic assessment within 3 months of a disaster.
- The strategy should be explicitly measured against the Red Cross Code but further indicators are required, notably in the case of unclear concepts such as accountability, transparency and dignity.
- Research should be used more widely to underpin strategy.
- The strategy must look at the wider picture and include an advocacy strategy.
- This is especially the case where the DEC response is relatively small in relation to the total response.

Building on local capacities.

- DEC members gave insufficient attention to the development of local capacity, especially of NGO partners.
- Livelihoods were emphasised in the public opinion research as the central focus for relief and rehabilitation.
- Shelter and livelihoods are closely inter-related.
- Employment in construction offers a significant opportunity to support local livelihoods.
- Migrant labour is likely to be exploited and may involve violations of rights.
- The input must be proportionate to the task. Insufficient help can undermine local capacities.

Independent Evaluation of Expenditure of DEC India Earthquake Appeal Funds

January 2001 – October 2001

VOLUME TWO

Full Evaluation Report

Humanitarian Initiatives, UK
Disaster Mitigation Institute, India
Mango, UK
December 2001

DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat/2

VOLUME TWO
Full Evaluation Report

Map (on printed version)
Acronyms
CONTENTS

1. Introduction
1.1. Earthquakes in India
1.2. The DEC Appeal
1.3. Methodology of the evaluation
2. The affected area
3. Social Consequences of the Earthquake
4. Public Opinion Research
5. The Red Cross Code
1. The humanitarian imperative
2. Aid without discrimination
3. Religion and politics
4. Freedom from external government influence
5. Respect for culture and custom
6. Building on local capacities
7. Involving beneficiaries
8. Reducing future vulnerabilities
9. Accountability
10. Respect for dignity in images

6. Conclusions
7. Recommendations
8. Main learning points

Appendices
1. Financial Summary
2. The Red Cross Code of Conduct
3. The Evaluation Team
4. Schedule of evaluation programme, and non-DEC persons consulted
5. Terms of Reference
6. Bibliography

VOLUME TWO

FULL EVALUATION REPORT

Tony Vaux
Team Leader

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (British Government)
DMI	Disaster Mitigation Institute (Ahmedabad, Gujarat)
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office
GSDMA	Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
PDS	Public Distribution System
SCF	Save the Children Fund (UK)
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund

1. INTRODUCTION

'Nothing is as strong as self-reliance' -villager named Rambha in Lakadia, Bhachau.

1.1. Earthquakes in India

1. Earthquakes are not uncommon in Western Gujarat. There were three severe tremors in the Bhavnagar area in October 2000 –these may have been early warnings of what was to come. The earthquake that occurred at 8.46 am on 26th January 2001, with its epicentre just north of the city of Bhuj, had exceptionally severe consequences. Its effects need no exaggeration. Measured on the Richter scale it was not 7.9 as most DEC agency reports stated, but -according to the Government of India's official figure[1]- 6.9. The confusion arose because other sources within India and abroad gave higher figures, up to 7.7[2], and somehow this was transposed upwards.

2. Nearly twenty thousand people died[3] and over a million homes were badly damaged or destroyed. The problems for aid agencies were compounded because the effects of the earthquake were spread over such a huge area. The last major earthquake in Gujarat at Anjar (Kutch) in 1956 measured 7.0 on the Richter scale but caused damage only within a single sub-District. By contrast, the 2001 earthquake practically destroyed four large towns and badly affected 23 Districts. It was an event of overwhelming importance throughout the Western part of Gujarat –Saurashtra and Kutch- with damage inflicted right across the State.

3. A measure of 6.9 on the Richter scale is not so very extraordinary in itself. Earthquakes of that severity are fairly common in India. In the last century there have been more than 250 earthquakes above 6.0, many of them comparable with this one[4]. North-East India experiences an earthquake measuring over 5.0 on the Richter Scale every 4 months and over 6.0 every 9 months. Assam experienced a colossal earthquake measuring 8.6 in 1950, -one of the largest recorded anywhere in the world. But the Gujarat earthquake was unexpected, and had not been prepared for.

4. The mortality caused by earthquakes in India is not well recorded but seems to vary widely. Human factors, notably building methods, play a major role as well as severity, timing, extent and population density. In California earthquakes of this magnitude cause little or no mortality. Seismic safety costs money and preparedness saves lives.

5. There is an in-built tendency for these 'Acts of God' to inflict their worst effects on the poorest people. None of the modern industrial establishments of Gujarat was damaged. '*God must be an industrialist'* said The Times of India. Industrialists can afford solid buildings and have the power to ensure that they are properly constructed.

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[1] National Centre for Disaster Management (NCDM). For more on earthquakes in India see '*Manual on Natural Disaster Management in India'* NCDM, Delhi, 2001.

[2] US Geological Survey.

[3] All statistics are political. A figure of 12,251 quoted in Times of India 19th October is based on estimates from 'District authorities' meaning political opposition. Aid agencies have often used figures as high as 50,000. See for example Indian Red Cross/IFRC 'Report by the India Earthquake Recovery and Rehabilitation Mission' p1.

[4] NCDM op cit p23

6. In this earthquake relatively few people were killed in buildings made of shaped stone blocks or reinforced concrete frames –provided that the normal building regulations had been followed. The problems occurred in traditional village houses constructed from rough stones with scanty cement and in buildings that had simply been badly constructed. Outrage followed the collapse of shoddily-built appartment blocks in Ahmedabad, 200 miles from the epicentre. In Kutch, the older areas of towns and villages were reduced to rubble –which is essentially what they were made of. But even within those areas many buildings withstood the earthquake.

7. Houses with heavy tile roofs suspended on walls made of rough stones crumbled as the earth vibrated below them. Sometimes poorer people escaped because their houses were built only of mud and thatch. The rich were safer in buildings caged in concrete and steel. Overall the immediate effect of the Gujarat earthquake was worst in the middle sections of society, especially those living in older houses. But the poor were especially vulnerable when it came to the distribution of assistance.

8. All sections of society showed a remarkable readiness to declare 'business as usual' – in fact a few weeks after the disaster we saw a sign bearing those words stuck on a heap of rubble in Bhuj. Three days after the earthquake trade in Ahmedabad was back to normal. By the end of the week small stalls had appeared even in the most devastated areas.

9. Gujarat will experience more earthquakes. It is located in the Himalayan collision zone where the Indo-Australian tectonic plate slides under the more northern Eurasian plate in a predominantly northern direction at a rate of one or two centimetres per year. With an earthquake over 5.0 predicted every 20 years[5], Gujarat is not so vulnerable as the north of India, but disasters, including cyclones and droughts, are common enough to make mitigation important. And with 56 million people in India affected by disasters every year[6] and Gujarat experiencing a serious cyclone every three years[7] it is important that the lessons should now be learnt.

[5] In and around Gujarat, magnitude 6.0 or greater: 1819, 1845, 1847, 1848, 1864, 1903, 1938, 1956, 2001.
[6] NCDM op cit p1
[7] Recent ones were 1975, 1976, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1996, 1998, 1999.

1.2. The Appeal

10. On 2nd February 2001 twelve aid agencies from the UK and Ireland launched an Appeal for 'the survivors of the earthquake' that eventually raised over £24million of which £5m was retained by individual agencies. One of them (CAFOD) dropped out early and left the other eleven[8] to spend the money. The DEC Chief Executive quickly used his discretion to extend the time-period for spending the funds from 6 to 9 months. But this timescale was still to prove a major obstacle. Within four weeks the agencies had to present their plans for that period. They had to finish their operations by the end of October. This evaluation was intended to assess what had happened up to that date. But because some 40% of the funds remained unspent at the end of October, the DEC had little choice but to allow an extension, or to be more exact, an extremely long 'period of closure', with a final end to operations at the end of July 2002.

1.3. Methodology of the Evaluation

11. **Stakeholder analysis.** The views of evaluators need to be based on explicit values and must reflect the opinions of the primary stakeholders –the people who were to be helped. Those views must also reflect the perspectives –as far as we can judge them- of the donors, the people who voluntarily contributed to the Appeal. Because the donors gave to the Appeal and not to specific agencies within it, this is an evaluation of the total response, not of individual members.

12. **Use of the Red Cross Code.** We use the Red Cross Code[9] [a]s the basis from which to explore values because it is the most widely accepted set of humanitarian values and all DEC members must sign up to it. By agreement with the DEC we have used this instead of the DEC's own 'six principles' which lack the same universal acceptance. The Code was evolved in the West and has not been negotiated with local NGOs or the people in need. In the decade since the Code was devised little has been done to promote it and too often it is just a 'badge' acquired easily by declaration. There is no process of scrutiny and even commercial security companies have signed up to it.[10] But it is in the public domain, and anyone donating to the DEC or receiving its aid could reasonably expect agencies to follow it.

13. **A voice for the 'survivors'.** The most difficult voice to hear is that of 'the survivors of the earthquake' for whom the Appeal was launched. Accordingly we commissioned a public opinion survey, through the Disaster Mitigation Institute in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. It covered 2,372 people in 50 rural and urban locations and was supplemented by interviews with some 30 key individuals. The results are described in more detail in the Public Opinion Research report (Volume Three). The research took twelve people six weeks to complete, and was supervised by three specialists. Our methodology may need improvement. But this is the first time as far as we are aware that such research has been used in a major evaluation. We hope that we will at least establish the principle that research into public opinion is a necessary part of DEC evaluations.

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[8] ActionAid, British Red Cross, CARE, Christian Aid, Concern, Help the Aged, Merlin, Oxfam, Save the Children, Tearfund, World Vision.

[9] The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. See Appendix. Full text and commentary at www.ifrc.org

[10] Arnorgroup, which includes Defence Systems Limited (DSL) for example.

14. **India-UK/Ireland balance and composition.** We have tried to integrate India and UK/Ireland perspectives within the evaluation team. Operations in India were managed and supported by Mihir Bhatt, Director of the Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI). These comprised the public opinion research led by Preeti Bhat, preliminary review of financial issues by Nimish Shah, and a review of shelter issues by Kirtee Shah. The Team Leader and main report-writer was Tony Vaux of Humanitarian Initiatives. Hugh Goyder, also of Humanitarian Initiatives, undertook the UK stakeholder survey, review of Sphere and comparison with other DEC evaluations. Alex Jacobs of 'Mango' was in charge of the financial management review. Sarah Routley gave methodological support for the public opinion survey. For more background on the team see Appendix Three.

15. **DEC Agencies.** We undertook 'stakeholder reviews' with the UK/Ireland offices of DEC agencies and with regional and field offices. In each of the three main field visits formal consultations were held with representatives of DEC agencies as a group. Extensive consultations took place with Government at National, State and District levels. We consulted UN agencies and DEC local partners, usually without the presence of member agency staff.

16. **Self-appraisal.** We have tried to encourage self-appraisal by DEC agencies. In meetings this worked well, but the results in written form were disappointing, probably reflecting the heavy workload of staff in the field. We made it clear from the start that we would not evaluate each agency and expected them to conduct their own evaluations. Some have done so. Oxfam, in particular, deserves credit for a very honest internal evaluation, and their willingness to share it with us.

17. **Institutional Learning.** As ALNAP recently concluded- *'Unless the evaluation process recognises its role in relation to institutional learning, it will lose its status'*[11]. From the perspective of the DEC members the best use of an evaluation is probably to lead to improvements in performance through institutional learning. Rather than commenting on individual actions and events (much of which is now 'water under the bridge') we will focus on drawing out learning points. But for these points to be absorbed agencies would need to allocate time to debating and communicating them. A question remains about the use of this report -does it need a process of discussion in order to extract the most value?

18. **Limitations.** The evaluation team has a number of significant links with DEC agencies, most notably with Oxfam. One of the team members, Mihir Bhatt, directs an organisation that is a partner of some DEC agencies. Mango has provided finance staff for DEC members, including for Gujarat. The gender balance of the team should have been more in favour of women. In retrospect we can see that the public opinion research could have been directed a little more towards poor and excluded sections of society in order to counter other biases. To an extent we have tried to counteract these factors in the final report.

[11] Accountability and Learning in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP): *'Humanitarian Action: Learning from Evaluation'* Annual Review 2001.

19. Some other factors were beyond our control. Because of the muddle about DEC timescales, most DEC evaluations are supposed to happen at the end of the process but actually take place in the middle. The solution should not be to tinker with the evaluation timetable but to sort out the timescales. Another limitation is that the length of this main report is not meant to be more than 30 pages. Despite exceeding this limit by 50% we still cannot always give the nuances of the debate or enough practical examples.

20. But the main limitations are our own. We received more than full cooperation from the DEC members and Secretariat, we were welcomed everywhere and the debates were enthusiastic.

21. **The report.** In order to compress the results, the DEC itself is the focus of the Executive Summary, and the full report focuses more on programme issues. Detailed reports on the Public Opinion Research, Shelter, Financial Management, and Sphere Standards are given in Volume Three. For general information about the DEC and its members please see the DEC website.

2. THE AFFECTED AREA

'Kutch presents an epitome of the larger story of India- constant invasions, a fusion of cultures: a dawning sense of nationalism. Kutchi annals are full of dramatic episodes; there is a remarkable wealth of 'remembered history', little of which has been written down.' L.F. Rushbrook Williams: 'The Black Hills'[12]

22. **Problems of information.** There is dearth of recent research material on the sociology of the earthquake area. Aid agencies such as Concern that tried to obtain material experienced the same limitation. As far as we could ascertain the best source of basic social information remains the (rather archaic) District Gazetteers. Many DEC agencies seem to have relied, at best, on anecdotal information for their analysis of the background to the earthquake. Lack of information –of many kinds- has been a major constraint on the response. We have suggested that the DEC as a body should offer to help members with information management –and social information could be part of this role.

23. **Physical Factors.** Most of the area affected by the earthquake is low-lying and flat. As a result there was much less disruption of transport and communications than many outsiders had expected. Road links with Kutch were restored within hours and railways within days. Before many aid agencies had arrived, electricity supplies had been restored across much of the area and within a month or so water supplies were back to the (rather inadequate) levels that existed before the earthquake. For more on this see the DEC Monitoring Report of March 2001.

24. **Environmental Factors.** Fortunately this earthquake has not caused major environmental change, as happened in 1819 when an earthquake caused the sea level to fall in the Great Rann (a huge salty estuary), and left harbours cut off from the sea. But the area is now in the grip of a long-term process of land degradation through deforestation, pollution and industrial development. Water tables are falling rapidly, and there is a particularly severe risk of salinity. The impact of water-harvesting projects in some areas will be greatly diminished by these factors.

[12] L.F.Rushbrook Williams: '*The Black Hills: Kutch in History and Legend'* Shenval 1958.

25. The area is extremely dry. Rain only falls in any significant amount every third year or so and many villages are normally served by water-tankers. Agencies unfamiliar with the area put themselves under excessive pressure to achieve results before the 'monsoon'. A European perspective on such matters may have distorted the response. Even though the rains were unusually heavy this year, the issue for people was not so much 'shelter' as livelihoods and security of possessions.

26. **Political Factors.** The political environment was extremely important, yet few DEC agencies read it properly. The Government of India was particularly favourable towards Kutch for a number of reasons. One was a fears of a separatist movement in an extremely sensitive location next to Pakistan. Kutch is almost an island poised in a salty lagoon between India and Pakistan. It has a language closer to Sindhi (a language of Pakistan) than Gujarati. Kutch has links with a scattered and influential trading community all over the world. Kutchi businessmen are a powerful economic and political force in Bombay. There is a fierce sense of independence which was admired in the earthquake response, but also gives government misgivings about Kutch. Not long after the disaster the people of Anjar organised a march to demand help for rehabilitation. They were apparently successful in achieving tax concessions on goods related to construction.

27. On top of this the State Government is the only one in India aligned to the national Government in Delhi, and very vulnerable. It has lost some recent elections and postponed others in Kutch because it is afraid of losing. The national Government was therefore very anxious to give the maximum support. As so often in India, where there is a political will, remarkable things happen. Services, including the food supply, were restored within days of the earthquake. Villagers reported that they had started receiving cash handouts within a week. Immense pressure was placed on the bureaucracy. By October, an amazing 96% of applications for compensation had been processed and payments had been made in respect of 143,802 totally collapsed houses and 836,333 partially damaged houses. DEC members needed to know –and should have known- that the government response would be on a massive scale.

28. They also needed to know that the civil service would be used as a political tool. Because they had just lost the elections in the District Panchayats (Councils) the State Government made heavy use of the civil service rather than local political institutions. The Village Panchayats had been dissolved on the pretext of the 'drought' emergency. This meant that there was little political pressure coming from below –and opened up a clear space for civil society organisations.
29. In short, the context meant that there was no need to bail out the government. But there was a very strong need to make sure that the government response was sensitive to the poor, rather than to its own political supporters. Unfortunately this leaves much doubt about DEC activities such as construction of health centres and pre-schools, partly because the DEC is substituting for what government will willingly do, and partly because the lack of political structures at the local level may undermine their ultimate use.

30. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that the survival of the national government depended on holding onto Gujarat. During October the Gujarat Chief Minister was replaced, and mainly because the national leadership thought he had failed to respond adequately to the earthquake.

31. **The Public Distribution System (PDS).** There is a tendency for aid agencies to cope with the complications of politics by ignoring government altogether or view it simply as an obstacle to doing what they want. Few, if any, seriously considered using the mechanism that already existed for the distribution of food to the poor. The Public Distribution System (PDS) operates a fair price shop in practically every village, providing basic foods at cheap prices to ration-card holders. This remarkable apparatus was functioning again within days of the disaster and enabled government to distribute 15,000 tonnes of food within a month, rendering private efforts in this sector largely superfluous. Because of political pressures, ration cards lost in the earthquake were quickly replaced. Rather than set up their own systems, involving endless surveys to find out who was in need, DEC agencies could have used this existing system and spent their time improving rather than duplicating it.

32. In the DEC research, people expressed concern about those who had lost their cards in the earthquake, migrants and people who were recently married and not yet registered. Moslems felt that the system did not properly reflect their larger family size. Agency work to improve the system could have had considerable impact.

33. A similar system was set up at the Government's request by the NGO consortium, Abhiyan (supported by SCF) to deal with non-food items. The two systems together offer a remarkable basis for reducing future vulnerability. They should be studied and lessons learnt for the future.

34. **Economic factors.** There is a massive and increasing economic disparity between the highly developed port areas and the declining rural hinterland. Increasingly the needs of the rural areas are being met by cheap goods from the towns rather than by rural craftsmen. Craft workshops in the villages must turn for survival to specialised urban markets or export abroad. After the earthquake the towns had to recover before rural producers could recover their markets. Aid agencies which supported 'traditional' rural crafts such as black-smithy found that the issue was not tools but markets. DEC members tended to limit their inputs to production, ignoring the more crucial issues of economic change.

35. The largest source of income for the rural poor is migrant labour and the largest single activity is salt-making. Small-scale production in the salt-pans has been on the decline because of problems of access to government land and increasing mechanisation by large companies. There are now enormous disparities between incomes going to companies and the wages paid to the sub-contracted workers. But despite the poverty of local labourers, there is still a threat that wages will be further undercut them by labour from the tribal areas and from outside Gujarat. The earthquake made it difficult for local labourers to leave their homes and families. The minimum required was a single secure room, and something more solid than a tent. Temporary housing not only offered shelter but also enabled labourers to return to work.

36. Kutch's historical role as a centre for trade and seafaring has created a substantial inflow of remittances. There is money in Kutch. The World Bank notes a credit-deposit ratio of 10.9 in Kutch compared with 85.7 in Ahmedabad. This suggests that better-off people in Kutch have substantial deposits and relatively few debts to banks. This is corroborated by the extraordinarily rapid reconstruction process in the towns and the appearance of fine new houses in devastated villages. By contrast, the poor make little use of bank lending and rely on moneylenders for loans, paying very high rates of interest.

37. **Social Factors.** Gujarat is a relatively prosperous State. The area affected by the earthquake is poorer than the average (26% people below the poverty line compared with 24% for the State) but well below the national average of 36%. Literacy rates in Kutch are 53% overall, and 41% for females –a little above the Indian averages[13]. The concentration of scheduled castes (12%) is much higher than the Gujarat average (7%) but below the India average (16%). In addition there are substantial numbers of scheduled tribes (7%) and minorities (20%). The largest among these 'backward' groups are the Moslems, constituting nearly 16% of the total population.

38. Kutch is home to India's most dynamic port, Kandla, which now handles 17% of the country's maritime traffic. By contrast a large number of villages receive water only by water-tanker, and there are often migrations because of drought. It is an area of contrasts.

39. The trading process generates social capital but civil society of the kind that leads to greater equality is lacking. In the earthquake area there are few examples of the dairy co-operatives and water-users' associations that are common elsewhere in Gujarat. In the last decade there has been an increase in the number of NGOs, many of them arising from needs felt during times of disaster. They were eager to involve themselves in this new catastrophe.

40. Caste retains a strong link with occupation. This has a direct implication for donors. An agency helping weavers will be helping a particular caste. If it works with a weavers' organisation, that organisation is likely to be a caste group and may have an exclusive attitude towards other social groups. Even training for blacksmiths, weavers and carpenters is likely to involve a strong differentiation by caste. Oxfam, for example, worked with an organisation that turned out to be almost exclusively concerned with one particular caste (the Rabari community of herders) and it resisted Oxfam's attempts to include others.

41. Villages in the earthquake area are physically separated into distinct sections based on caste. In some cases a group may be invisible from the other, literally and metaphorically. If asked about the population of the village higher castes may 'forget' about poorer caste groups, and so they are left off the lists for distribution.

42. **Gender.** Reflecting the overall situation in India, the number of women in Kutch District is less than men (964 per 1000) indicating a relative lack of resources allocated to female children[14]. But the status of women is a complex issue. The custom of covering the face in the presence of men does not mean that women do not take part in community issues. Women's economic and social roles are important and recognised with respect. Programmes run by women or involving women are not a problem.

43. **Previous disasters.** The area had attracted national attention during previous disasters including the Morvi Flood of 1979 and more recently the cyclones of 1998 and 1999. Kutch is a marginal area, suffering a series of droughts in the last decade. There is a certain readiness for further disaster both in the government and in the network of NGOs (Kutch Navnirman Abhiyan –known simply as 'Abhiyan') which was specifically formed after the 1999 cyclone to co-ordinate NGO activities around disaster relief.

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[13] World Bank/ADB op cit.

[14] In the State of Kutch, female infanticide was practised by the dominant landowning families until suppressed by the British in the nineteenth century.

44. Gujarat State has the strongest tradition of NGOs in India. It is home to the powerful Gandhian network as well as a number of huge organisations set up by religious and business groups. It has a group of the most progressive NGOs in the country.

45. In conclusion, the earthquake area presented severe complications in the social sector because of caste, the presence of excellent NGOs, and a powerful and willing government structure -but not one oriented towards the poor. Success came to external agencies which made the strategic link by using NGOs to address social complexities, and then turned to make the government focus on the poor. Those that tried to go it alone, or worked with caste groups, were much less successful.

46. **Learning Points-**
    - The effects of earthquakes vary according to severity, timing and aftershocks interacting with physical and social characteristics of the area. It is unwise to make false assumptions –such as that the area is 'cut off' and supplies have to be rushed in from far away, or even from abroad.
    - The government's PDS offers an important potential channel for relief assistance. It could be developed as a tool for disaster relief. Study of this system would contribute to disaster preparedness in India.
    - The irregular occurrence of earthquakes in the area makes it difficult to measure the benefit of seismic safety against cost.
    - Interventions in support of livelihoods have to be based on a proper understanding of markets.
    - In the absence of formal sociological data, NGO partnerships become more important, and are also the best way to reduce future vulnerability.
    - Many DEC members underestimated local capacity.
    - The Abhiyan network should be evaluated in order to extract further lessons.

3. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE EARTHQUAKE

'Discrimination is always there in our village. It was there during rescue and relief activities after the earthquake. We have to live in this village so we do not talk about that now' -labourer, Vamka Village, Rapar.

47. 26th January was Republic Day and parades were due to take place at 9am. When the earthquake happened, fourteen minutes earlier, many children and onlookers were out in the open getting ready for the celebrations and so escaped the collapse of walls and roofs. If the earthquake had occurred at night when people were asleep in their houses the mortality would have been very much higher. As it was, the spread of injury and death depended on what people happened to be doing.

48. Mortality was highest among women because many were at home doing the household chores. The loss of mothers became a major social problem. Many young children were left in the care of grandparents and older relatives (especially older women) while the fathers went out to work. As HelpAge have pointed out, in many families the value and status of older people increased. By contrast those widowed by the earthquake faced huge social problems. Such women were often unable to establish their rights of ownership to their house-plots unless they received assistance in doing so. ActionAid was perhaps the only DEC member to recognise and address this issue.

49. Many people were temporarily or permanently disabled. But aid agencies only offered immediate medical treatment. Statistics for operations hid the fact that many people needed rehabilitation in the home, and help with adapting to new circumstances because of disability. Because there was so little help, many people unnecessarily lost mobility and livelihoods. The issue of disability was badly neglected. Agencies sometimes referred to the presence of a specialist organisation, Handicap International. But they were working only in a very limited area. Every agency should have addressed disability as an integral part of its programmes.

50. **Livelihoods and shelter.** An important characteristic of the area is that for a majority of people houses are workplaces as well as homes, and so the earthquake destroyed livelihoods as well as lives. The problem was not simply the direct destruction of workplace homes but also that people could not go out to work because they had no safe place to keep their possessions. The rapid provision of semi-permanent, secure structures was extremely important for recovery. SCF and Caritas (CAFOD) were the only agencies to recognise this issue. This is a serious shortcoming of the DEC response, especially because funds were lying unused at the crucial time.

51. **Discrimination.** In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake there was a process of social levelling. There were tales of friendship and neighbourliness cutting across caste and religion. The armed forces, government officials and workers in water, electricity and roads all did heroic work[15]. But even from the start there were signs that the rich were more willing to exploit the situation than the poor-

    'They (people of the better-off communities) would call the rescue personnel and tell them- "sir, come here, we have our relatives buried here". In fact there may or may not have been people buried at the spot, but they managed to get their streets cleared of debris in this manner. Our people did not use this trick and they were too scared to approach the rescue people, so we could not get the rescue workers to pay any attention to us.' -man in Anjar[16]

    A poor Moslem woman told us-

    'The leaders and committee members got lots of relief. The ex-Sarpanch (village leader) has built a new house outside the village. Nobody is bothered about the poor'

52. Some organisations came to the earthquake area specifically to help certain groups such as caste Hindus, dalits[17], old people, women and so on. What were the legitimate limits of discrimination? The government took the view that those who had lost the most property were entitled to the most help. Was this right?

[15] Described more fully in the DEC Monitoring Mission report of March 2001 (see DEC website).
[16] Dalit is the most acceptable word for scheduled castes, formerly known as 'untouchables'.
[17] The quotation is from BSC Ahmedabad and ISI Delhi *'Relief Activities in the Earthquake Affected Areas of Gujarat: The perceptions of the -Marginalised Communities'.* Dalit is the most acceptable word for scheduled castes or 'untouchables'.

53. DEC members were not as alert as they should have been to the process of discrimination and social division which occurred during the earthquake response. Disasters shake up society and the ownership of resources becomes fluid. This usually results in the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The axiom of social processes in disasters is- *'to those that have, more shall be given. And from those that have little, even what they have shall be taken away.'* The effects are particularly pronounced –and well known- in the Indian subcontinent because of the stratification of caste. It can be reasonably predicted that issues of social justice and social exclusion will be core concerns for any poverty-focused response to disaster. In the absence of efforts to the contrary, the long-term result of the Gujarat earthquake is social polarisation.

54. **Learning Points.**
- In societies where there are problems associated with the legal status of women, agencies should expect the issue of widowhood to be important.
- The issue of disability is often neglected. It should not be left to specialist organisations (there are none big enough) but integrated into disaster responses.
- The notion of shelter can be a misleading one; houses are places of work as much as protection from the elements.
- Poverty-focused agencies must expect to make explicit plans to deal with the tendency for wealth to polarise in disasters.

4. PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

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55. For details of the methodology and findings see the detailed report in Volume Three. We found a reasonably high level of satisfaction among 'consumers' of DEC services-

Table: Percentage of persons satisfied with response (DEC research)

	Food and Nutrition	Drinking Water and Health (Long Term and Short Term)	Shelter and Services		Livelihood
			Temp	Permnt	
Quality	98%	90%	81%	80%	83%
Quantity	80%	68%	86%	45%	40%
Accessibility	95%	57%	86%	60%	61%
Affordability	99%	86%	90%	50%	60%
Reliability	99%	68%	92%	60%	50%

56. Overall people were more impressed with the immediate relief response than with progress of livelihood issues and permanent shelter. What people were commenting on was the general response, not specifically that of the DEC. The research offers more detailed insights-

57. **Spread.** The research showed that the geographical spread of the response had been uneven. Sufficient and excess relief was received by 73% of villages in Kutch but only 54% in affected areas outside Kutch. The urban-rural bias was even more pronounced, with 74% of rural communities recording satisfaction but only 28% of urban communities.

58. **Timeliness.** Timing of relief distributions was generally good in relation to food (!00% satisfaction), clothing (80%), water (77%), blankets (70%) but less so for temporary shelter (51%) –probably reflecting the fact that so few people got this kind of assistance. Further dissatisfaction was expressed about livelihoods support (60% thought it was too late) and the most dissatisfaction concerned the slow progress on permanent housing (96%). People also expressed dissatisfaction with insensitivity in the timing- *'we had not yet buried our dead and we were expected to stand in line to collect relief items. I refused to open my door. What use is food to the dead?'*

59. **Quantity.** There were nearly 500 interventions recorded in the 50 villages but half of these were assessments, meetings and surveys. Despite so much gathering of information, from the people's point of view there was still wide variation in the quantities of aid given. 44% of communities stated that they had received insufficient clothes and 28% received too many. Similar observations are made about food and tents. Over 50% of communities felt that shelter interventions were in insufficient amounts. Water was considered adequate in 78% of communities but 21% experienced serious problems including some communities which had to wait up to four days for tanks –supposed to be filled daily- to be refilled.

60. **Quality.** 79% of people thought that the quality of relief interventions was good with only 17% thinking it was OK and only 4% considering it of low quality. Food, water and domestic kits were thought to be of particularly high quality, while there were lower levels of satisfaction with the quality of blankets, medical work and livelihoods interventions. The issue of quality in shelter interventions produced a range of different views. Some thought tents were of high quality but found them too small and too hot.

61. **Appropriateness.** Without exception communities felt that the clothes distributed were not appropriate, particularly in the case of women, especially older women, Muslims and men who normally wore traditional clothes. The majority of communities stated that the clothing was only used for filling quilts –'we got many clothes but I haven't seen anyone wearing them' as one person said. There was praise for a 3-month food distribution by World Vision as this took the pressure off people having to find employment immediately and gave them greater security. Oxfam's distribution of seeds to all farmers with land was thought more appropriate that government's which was directed only to those with more than 10 acres.

62. **Selection of beneficiaries.** People felt that organisations should distribute to the poor first, and not on a first-come first-served basis. They wanted outsiders to ask communities who were the poor rather than rely on the views of leaders. They objected to the use of the Government's grading system (based on damage to houses) as the basis for other distributions. Similarly there was resentment about the government's plan to give larger amounts to those who had larger houses. People noticed that an agency distributed many tents in some communities but refused to help others. They stated that the criteria were not known to them.

63. **Cultural change.** There was a widespread view that the processes used to distribute relief were often unacceptable to women and particular social groups. Such programmes were designed without knowledge of community norms, or with the aim of changing them –which proved unrealistic.

64. **Priorities for intervention.** People constantly emphasised the need to restore livelihoods rather than receive relief and expressed some frustration that outsiders did not listen to them on this point. They wanted to receive cloth and make their own clothes rather than receive clothing but no-one took any notice. They particularly valued cash interventions because they increased people's capacity to choose their own priorities and focus on livelihoods. Similarly distribution of building materials was seen as preferable to construction because it gave greater choice.

65. **Representation.** People distinguished consultation with leaders, with relief committees and with the general community –giving a strong preference for the latter. Leaders were the least likely to be representative, but relief committees were also viewed with suspicion as not representing all the different groups (castes). People felt that general consultations should have been more common. Out of 175 interventions considered in the survey, only 61 involved the general community. There were suggestions that key community representatives, informally selected, might have played a better role than the formal leaders and committees.

66. **Consultation.** People felt that even after they were consulted their views were not incorporated into plans, and blamed this on agencies having designed their programmes in advance. There were a number of exceptions given. EFFICOR had modified the size of tents after complaints. Under SEWA's insurance scheme (CARE) men had been allowed to participate etc. But the overall view was that communities should be involved at all stages- selection of beneficiaries, decisions about priorities and programming. If there had been better consultation they felt that recovery would have been faster.

67. **Participation.** Participation was often seen as a ploy to secure what was to the agency's advantage such as free labour and reduced costs. One observation was that 'consultation was sought only to complete the paperwork'. Instead of leading to a sense of partnership such 'participation' seems to have alienated the community. A troubling finding is that among communities assisted by DEC agencies, three times as many were considered to show insufficient participation compared with other communities. People noted that consultation was most likely to be done effectively by agencies which were already known and trusted in the area (the CARE partner SEWA was given as an example). In general people felt that they had not been involved enough in the assessment process and the selection of beneficiaries but only on small modifications to pre-existing programmes[18]

68. **<u>Learning Points.</u>**
    - There was a tendency for aid to focus too much around the centre of the earthquake area.
    - Urban areas have been neglected.
    - Clothing is a culturally sensitive issue.
    - Ignoring cultural distinctions of caste and gender was not acceptable.
    - Although the research was not skewed towards the poor, it reflects a strong feeling that the poor should be targeted.
    - People place great emphasis on livelihoods.
    - People felt ill-informed about the aid-givers and their criteria.
    - There are serious concerns about consultation and participation.
    - As far as possible, consultation should be open to all, not restricted to leaders.

[18] People in the research project proved to be very interested in the process of categorising the different levels and types of participation. See full report.

5. EVALUATION AGAINST THE RED CROSS CODE

5.1. Red Cross Principle[19] One: The humanitarian imperative comes first.

'The prime motive of our response to disaster is to alleviate human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the stress caused by disaster' –from subtext**.**

'Because they had something to give, they gave it to us' - DEC Public opinion survey.

Key Issues: Relief planes, global needs, time-scale for response, DEC systems

68. The story of the initial relief phase has already been told in our Monitoring Report of March 2001. Despite over 200 aftershocks in the first fortnight, including a massive 5.9 shock on 28th January, nearly 30,000 people from the armed forces and government staff were mobilised to respond in the first few days along with 13,000 contracted staff. At the height of the response there were- '448 NGOs, 332 voluntary doctors, 70 nursing staff and 7332 volunteers assisting'[20]. A fact which only came to light recently (having been ignored by the global media) was that a search-and-rescue team from the Tamil Nadu fire-brigade was mobilised on the day of the disaster and achieved just as much as the much-publicised foreign teams. Perhaps it is only natural for aid agencies to emphasise their own achievements, but there is a danger in doing so that they belittle local efforts and contribute to arrogant and even racist attitudes in the West.

Relief Planes.

69. Once again DEC members were guilty of wasting money by sending off relief planes with materials that were unnecessary or available locally at a much cheaper price[21]. An exception is the Red Cross hospital, flown out from Europe. This was justifiable because the District Hospital in Bhuj had collapsed. But Oxfam pumps, pipes and buckets flown out immediately after the disaster remained unused weeks and even months later[22]. Water-tanks were available locally and were being distributed in large numbers by other agencies. A similar flight was sent out by Concern[23]. Each flight costs over £100,000 and yet practically all the items could have been bought locally at a fraction of the cost, and with additional benefits to the local economy. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that these decisions were based more on a desire for publicity –or at best a culpable laziness about the use of DEC funds- rather than assessment of needs. They constitute a violation of the 'humanitarian imperative'. In view of the persistence of this problem, and its potential to discredit the DEC, we suggest that any agency organising a relief flight should (for the record) submit a short justification to the DEC within a week of doing so.

[19] The Code is divided into Principles. They should not be confused with the seven 'fundamental principles' of the Red Cross movement such as humanity, impartiality etc
[20] GSDMA
[21] The same issue was raised in the DEC's Orissa evaluation.
[22] The buckets were seen by the evaluators in March –still unused. Oxfam's internal evaluation raises similar questions.
[23] This caused controversy and some demotivation among Concern staff.

Relative global needs.

70. A wider question arises from the fundamental nature of public Appeals. Some aid agency staff have argued that a substantial proportion of the funds raised for Gujarat could have been better used elsewhere, notably for the earthquake in El Salvador, which had received much less media attention and (consequently) much less aid. DEC Appeals are based on three criteria: public interest, need and capacity to respond. The critical issue is the way in which public interest is created by the media. Since this may derive from the chances of news-slots and the impact of specific images, an Appeal does not necessarily correspond simply to need and capacity.

71. There are also variations in the amounts raised relative to need. The Orissa cyclone of the previous year caused a similar level of damage and need but raised only a third of the amount raised for Gujarat. The Kosovo crisis, with much lower mortality rates than either, but much greater media attention, raised nearly eight times as much as Orissa. Thus, at the very heart of the DEC's functioning is a contradiction of the 'humanitarian imperative'. In terms of public appeals –and their results- humanitarian need does not come first.

72. In Gujarat the mismatch became stark because of the unexpectedly high response to the Appeal and because of massive response from other quarters, notably from India. DFID and ECHO also tend to follow 'public interest' (often a euphemism for media coverage) and so compound the problem. There is normally only one DEC Appeal in a year but commonly twenty serious disasters. The major donors, public and broadcasters should be persuaded to put their generosity on a more equitable and sustained footing.

DEC time-scale for response.

73. Many assumptions are made about the expectations of the public without much evidence. A result of this has been a rule that DEC funds should be spent within six to nine months, and concentrated on relief rather than longer-term issues. A recent survey suggests that the public holds no such view and recognises the need for longer engagements. The DEC's short timescale causes serious problems in following Red Cross Code Principles, notably the requirement to build local capacities and reduce future vulnerabilities.

74. In Gujarat, the mismatch between availability of funds and timescale became so great that some managers began to make spending funds their objective rather than helping the 'survivors of the earthquake', as required by the Appeal. Levels of consultation, participation and involvement in management declined. A steady decline in the quality of operations (with exceptions) has been noticeable in DEC responses since March. At the time of our Monitoring Report aid managers felt confident about their programmes and morale was high, but this confidence declined over the following months as the October deadline approached and they became more and more concerned with spending the money.

75. Some managers had received explicit instructions to spend up to 'targets' almost regardless of other issues. Recognising these pressures DEC aid managers in India met at Gandhidham in Kutch in April and drafted a request to their head offices to extend the deadline for spending funds. In particular they referred to the need for more time for-

- Consultations with the affected people
- Understanding social and environmental issues[24]
- Public awareness programmes, especially about seismic safety
- Adjusting their plans for village 'adoption'
- Co-ordinating more closely with government
- Strategising beyond issues of shelter and rebuilding

76. These are almost exactly the points on which the evaluation now criticises the agencies, suggesting that the fundamental problem of the response was not a failure of aid managers in the field but a systemic problem of an inappropriate timescale.

77. The request for an adjustment in time-scales was sent to the head offices of DEC agencies but there was little response. The same managers met again in June, reiterating the same points and concluding- *'Although many of the agencies have now developed programme plans to utilise the DEC money within the 9-month timeframe, many feel that the programmes have been strongly influenced by the timeframe rather than determined by the most appropriate/desirable approaches and best utilisation of NGO competencies.'*

78. At the Annual General Meeting of the DEC early in July there was strong pressure from some agencies to extend the deadline, and resistance from others. The 9-month timescale for spending funds from DEC Appeals had come about as a result of a review process in the mid-1990s. According to DEC Trustees consulted for this evaluation, the process was affected by a sense of dissatisfaction among the broadcasters. They had found that DEC members were keeping back Appeal funds for long periods and spending them on regular long-term development programmes. They had insisted on a deadline, and the members were now afraid to go back to the broadcasters asking for longer. Uncertainty about the views of broadcasters had become a source of tensions between DEC members.

79. In the case of Gujarat, the DEC Chief Executive tried hard to keep to the 9-month spending period. In July he wrote- *'In discussions with Members in April and June, the difficulties had already been highlighted, but the Secretariat had always insisted that an extension to the 9-month implementation period was not acceptable. The policy position was reconfirmed at the AGM, where it was agreed that any policy changes would have to be discussed at the September Board meeting.'*[25]

80. There were different views among DEC members. Some with large networks such as the British Red Cross expected little difficulty in spending very large amounts within nine months. Those that had to mobilise different partner networks in different countries, such as ActionAid and Christian Aid, needed more time. Their stronger poverty focus also favoured a more long-term approach.

81. The outcome was a 'fudge' by the DEC Secretariat in the form of a 'closing down period' of nine months from October. Some agencies realised that this was actually a green light to extend their programmes. It just had to be called something else. But managers in the field received poor or confused information and many continued to believe that October was the deadline and 'closing down' meant literally that.

[24] Reference was made to an Oxfam project which became a focus of caste violence in which 8 people were killed.

[25] Brendan Gormley to Trustees 16/7/01

82. Agencies tried to scale up to meet their commitments to spend DEC funds but those that persisted in being operational rather than using local partnerships got into considerable difficulties. Those with the largest shares were Oxfam, SCF and British Red Cross. Unable to overcome severe internal difficulties, Oxfam had been unable to develop a strategy and had to return more than half its funding to the DEC. The British Red Cross and SCF planned to use substantial amounts for reconstructing government buildings –not the best possible use of funds- and anyway their plans were falling far behind schedule.

83. All three agencies experienced problems of recruitment, the most severe being Oxfam where the lack of long-term strategy meant that posts were only offered for short periods. The process became a vicious circle with poor programmes failing to attract good staff. By contrast agencies working through local partners, notably ActionAid, were able to scale up and take more funds.

84. The experience brings into question the original allocation between the agencies. This derives from the Indicator of Capacity (IOC) mechanism which is based on a global assessment of agency capacity. The Gujarat case reveals very clearly the limitation of such a mechanism. The key to success in Gujarat was not global capacity but local partnerships. World Vision and CARE were able to gear up smoothely by deploying staff from their massive operations in India. World Vision –without expatriates but drawing on its large programmes in India- took a further £0.4m over its initial DEC share. ActionAid, Christian Aid and Concern did well by mobilising the support of local NGOs. ActionAid with no expatriate staff scaled up very fast and by June requested a further £0.6m on top of its initial share of £1.2m.

85. A good example of a member which showed a flexible response is CARE, which despite a substantial operational capacity in India correctly decided to work largely through NGO partners in its livelihood programme in Gujarat. Notably, CARE provided insurance through the Self Employed Women's Association (a union of 300,000 women) to 5,000 vulnerable women. This programme is one of many examples that could be given of opportunities to scale up through local organisations.

86. It was the more operational agencies, working on their own -SCF, British Red Cross, Merlin and Oxfam- that experienced the greatest difficulties. SCF did well in partnership with Abhiyan and the Red Cross operation was outstanding in the relief phase working within the Federation, but both were less impressive in rehabilitation. Merlin was unable to find a role for its skills in the health sector because the government already had those skills and was supported by massive multilateral organisations such as UNICEF and WHO. Oxfam, with an unrivalled set of partner agencies, failed to make effective use of them because of internal malfunctioning.

87. According to DEC rules the plans submitted at the outset of an Appeal must be *'must be completed over a period decided by the Trustees, currently six to nine months'*. The intention is clearly that all funds should be used in the initial period. After such projects have been completed there is provision for a 'fund closing' mechanism by which *'All remaining funds… will be divided amongst participating agencies on the basis of proposals submitted for long-term reconstruction and/or disaster preparedness by members committing to longer term presence in the disaster area.'* While the Chief Executive undoubtedly did right by using the closing mechanism as an extension, it makes a nonsense of the Rules if half the funds are carried forward into a 'closing' mechanism, and the closing mechanism lasts as long as the actual period of spend.

88. Using more funds in the rehabilitation phase undoubtedly reflected the realities of the Gujarat case, but the DEC rules distorted the process of planning. Instead of making strategic plans related to the actual 18-month period of spend, managers planned in two phases that did not correspond to either relief or rehabilitation. The result was a serious loss of inefficiency overall.

89. **Conclusions.** The details of this process are spelt out in more detail in our report on Financial Management (Volume Three). Funds were not spent efficiently between the different agencies. By the time Oxfam reduced the amount it intended to take, other agencies had lost the opportunity to use it. Oxfam managers struggled to meet targets for spending while other managers could have used more if there had been a more flexible system related to need and capacity. Many local NGOs with international reputations complained of under-funding.

90. Funds were used to substitute for government rather than address the real issues of social marginalisation. The process was too much driven by the determination of some members to spend their 'share' in order to maintain their global allocation for the future.

91. Any reform arising from the issues raised in this report would require a fundamental change not only in systems but also in behaviours. They do not all have to be the same. Up to a point competition works well in driving agencies to succeed in particular niches. In totality they cover a wide range of funding and response options. But the Gujarat case shows that they are not good at adapting to different situations. The simplest way to address this is by improving the mechanism by which funds are allocated within the group. Since the argument is that different situations require different solutions our recommendation is not to tinker with the IOC mechanism but simply to regard it as a starting mechanism for analysis and negotiation rather than a rigid formula that obliges each agency to spend a predetermined proportion of DEC income.

DEC Systems.

92. Planning and strategy are essential in order to ensure that the humanitarian imperative comes first. This has to be based on proper assessment (see below) and formal processes of analysis, discussion and review. We found few records of these processes and in an alarming number of cases they did not happen. DEC systems contributed to the problem because the timing of DEC documentation is not well aligned to realities in the field, and the formats are not sufficiently strategic. The issue of formats is now being addressed by the DEC in the new Handbook, but the issue of timing remains unresolved. Currently members must submit a plan for 6 months within four weeks of the Appeal. The first couple of weeks are chaotic and the second may be spent getting relief work organised. There has been no time for planning but agencies then become caught into plans which have never been properly debated but become rigid because they were submitted to the DEC. The DEC can release funds for initial relief but must have plans as early as possible. We consider that an extra two weeks for planning could make a crucial difference.

93. It is also important that the DEC Secretariat remains in close touch to prevent straitjacketing and encourage an approach to planning that remains responsive to needs. Above all the DEC needs to be more active in ensuring that agencies have the best and most complete information about DEC systems, requirements and projections. This is a further argument for the DEC to take information management as a key function.

94. **Conclusions: Principle One.** At first sight the humanitarian imperative should have presented few difficulties in this situation. There was no pressure to appease warring parties or external pressure to work on any basis other than need. Unfortunately the mismatch between funding and capacity and the inappropriateness of DEC timescales and systems caused a considerable deviation from the ideal. But some DEC members recognised the issue and balanced their response very effectively.

95. **Learning points**
    - Evaluation suggests that relief flights are unlikely to be necessary in India, and perhaps should be viewed with more caution elsewhere.
    - The process of DEC Appeals leads to an inefficient allocation of resources for disasters on a global scale. The DEC and its members should take this up with DFID, ECHO and the broadcasters.
    - The ability to scale up is related more to the ability to form partnerships than to global capacity.
    - The DEC's 'IOC' mechanism of allocation of funds to members should be regarded as a starting point only, and reviewed in each disaster.
    - The DEC should move from planning at four weeks to planning at six weeks and improve the quality in terms of analysis and strategic input.

5.2. Red Cross Code Principle Two: Aid is given regardless of race, creed or nationality.

'We will base the provision of relief aid upon a thorough assessment' –subtext.

'The people were unaware of any needs assessments being carried out in the early stages of the response.' -DEC research report.

Key issues: assessment, targeting, co-ordination.

Assessment.

96. Despite many requests the evaluation team was unable to locate any assessment material of high quality. Although agencies referred to their 'assessments' these often turned out to be no more than an exchange of correspondence or views between agency staff. Assessment 'visits' were little more than a rapid tour of the area with a few random questions –sometimes conducted by people who had never been in Gujarat or worked in a traditional caste-based society.

97. This is a matter of considerable concern because the fundamental weakness of the DEC response was a lack of appreciation of the wider context. Our research suggests that many people had visited the villages asking questions but very often these were attempts to identify recipients for the goods on offer, rather than actually assess needs[26]. This may be understandable up to a point during the initial relief phase. The problem is that agencies did not go back later and do the work properly.
98. Assessment is required both under the Red Cross Code (Principle Two) and also under the Sphere Standards –and DEC agencies have signed both. The issue is covered in some detail in our Sphere review (Volume Three). Perhaps Sphere's division of assessment into separate branches (Water, Nutrition, Food Aid, Shelter and Health) has contributed to our perception that the people in need were not given real choices. Whatever the reason we would suggest that as a minimum each member should have carried out a comprehensive review of needs, including the views of all major stakeholders, within six weeks of a disaster, and that this document should be the basis for longer-term planning.

99. Our research indicates that 'assessments' were duplicated, and that people in some villages felt abused by the process. Out of 50 villages in the research, none received less than eight agencies offering help in the relief phase. The DEC has a minimal responsibility within its own network to share information about such assessments to prevent duplication. The DEC Monitoring Report refers to cases where DEC agencies have distributed the same goods to the same people.

100. Maximum use should be made of what is already available. A remarkable feature in Gujarat was that the local NGOs Abhiyan and 'Patheya'[27] compiled comprehensive databases soon after the earthquake. But as far as we were informed, this documentation was used only by SCF, Concern and ActionAid.

[26] See findings p3.
[27] 'Patheya' *Some basic information on earthquake affected Kutch District,* Ahmedabad March 2001.

Targeting.

101. The public opinion research was specifically designed to examine what 'the survivors of the earthquake' thought about the targeting of assistance and the requirements of Red Cross Principle Two. A particularly stark finding is that 'communities felt that relief was not given according to need'[28]. This refers mainly to the initial relief period. It shows a critical attitude towards organisations that select beneficiaries according to their own mandate and distribute aid either through them to other groups or to that group only.

102. Of those who felt that they had been wrongly discriminated against in relief assistance, the most common issues were caste, politics and location. Less common issues were religion, assessment of damage, assessment of individual needs and size of the community group (larger groups were perceived to receive more). The least common objection was against discrimination by gender, age and occupation –which was widely regarded as acceptable.

103. The research matches the evaluators' general conclusion that the main problems of discrimination surrounded caste and politics –and that certain rural areas near the epicentre got most aid, while urban areas and those further away got least.

104. **Geographical spread.** Because the public opinion research took place over the whole of the affected area it is possible to compare levels of satisfaction in different places as an indicator of actual distribution. While sufficient or excess relief was received in 73% of communities in Kutch, the level was only 54% outside Kutch. This corroborates the view taken by Concern that other areas had been neglected. The greater discrepancy was between rural (74% cover) and urban areas (only 28%). Dissatisfaction was expressed by 71% of urban communities compared with only 26% of rural communities. Yet with the exception of some urban work by Unnati (ActionAid and Christian Aid) DEC members have worked almost entirely in rural areas.

105. **Rich and Poor.** The research indicates a widespread view that aid did not go to the poorest but accumulated in the hands of the rich. People refer to an indirect; process of discrimination through village 'representatives' especially the Village Leader (Sarpanch) and Relief Committee. People had both positive and negative reactions to this. Powerful spokespersons were regarded as important in attracting aid to the village as a whole[29] but there were fears about their ability to influence the flow of aid within the village for their own purposes. The overall perception is that more relief went to those with strong political connections –and strengthened their political power- while less went to the lower castes, women, migrant groups and minorities, notably Moslems.

106. The level of acceptance of 'positive' discrimination by gender, age and occupation is qualified by insistence that it must also relate to need. Some people felt that discrimination was justified when HelpAge targeted old people but only because old people were left out by other agencies. There was not full agreement on this. Others stated that the criteria should be purely economic (needs) independent of age or other factors. Discrimination by occupation was acceptable whereas discrimination by caste (which is closely related to occupation) was not.

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[28] P3

[29] 'one strong well-connected leader is better than a hundred others' is one recorded comment.

107. This became a serious issue where DEC members worked with caste-based NGOs. At the State level there is little risk of such a bias but a number of NGOs in Kutch simply represent their own caste. Oxfam was insufficiently aware of this problem when it established its compound on property belonging to a caste-based organisation (MKT) which then used its influence on Oxfam to divert disproportionate aid to their own caste group, the Rabaris..

108. In the DEC research, people made little distinction between aid from government and from other sources. But a survey[30] among the poorest groups carried out by the ActionAid partner Behavioural Science Centre (a radical Catholic-based organisation) concludes that government had failed to reach the marginalized groups whereas NGOs had been more successful.[31] Because our research was designed to be representative of all points of view –and was based largely on open public meetings- we may have understated the sense of alienation felt by the most vulnerable groups, and specifically the marginalisation of women. The research report notes- *'women, lower caste groups and those representing smaller numbers stated that they were often left out of decision-making in the relief committees and hence were also omitted from the distributions.'* As one person said- *'When the clothes were dropped on the road by trucks, there was a stampede. The women were too shy to go.'*

109. **Agency demands.** The request by agencies for a 'community contribution' or 'participation' (See Principle Nine for more on this) could become a source of discrimination. In one case older people were asked to collect tents from a distance of 15km[32]. From the perspective of the people affected it seems that a bewildering array of people came and asked the same questions. There were complaints about insensitivity in some cases *('we had not yet buried the dead and we were expected to stand in line…')* and there were complaints about repetitive surveys in some areas while others received no attention at all.

110. **People and animals.** One of the main focuses of civil society in Gujarat is the care of animals, especially (but not exclusively) cows. When the disaster struck, twelve veterinary teams were immediately deployed to the area and 2006 animals were treated for injuries from collapsed buildings[33]. Gujarat has a large number of animal sanctuaries (Panjrapols) and special feeding points for cattle (Gaushalas). The earthquake area, with a strong Jain influence, is probably the most animal-sensitive part of India. A number of agencies mistakenly directed their resources to fodder distribution only to find that local organisations were addressing the issue on a much more lavish scale and that government, under local pressure, had also introduced a very generous scheme. Arguably animals did better than (the poorest) people.

[30] BSC/ISI op cit.
[31] The report gives a figure of 2% scheduled castes (dalits) receiving aid from government compared with 53% from NGOs. This may be an exaggeration. Regrettably, a good deal of the report reads as an attack on government rather than a social survey.
[32] From discussions with HelpAge we know that they (later at least) allowed other family members to collect.
[33] GSDMA

Co-ordination.

111. A fundamental purpose of co-ordination is to reduce duplication and ensure better targeting. It is therefore especially relevant to the issue of discrimination. In the Gujarat case, the local NGOs were the most effective at co-ordination and the multilateral agencies the least. The Abhiyan NGO network set up information centres all over Kutch at a very early stage, provided guidance to newly-arrived agencies about needs and gained government approval to host meetings for co-ordination. The attempts by the UN to set up co-ordinating processes were a failure. As recorded by the Monitoring Mission, a series of UNDAC teams arrived soon after the earthquake and requested information from all concerned, but did not feed back any information or guidance. The UNDP delegation, which arrived later, picked up on the process more vigorously but lacked the resources to manage the task effectively.

112. Some international agencies seem to have been reluctant to be co-ordinated by a local NGO. There was a great deal of gossip about Abhiyan. The DEC did well to set up its own co-ordinating mechanism within days of the disaster and to continue meetings on a regular basis throughout. The meetings were especially useful at channelling the concerns of field staff and provided important moral support to local managers. The attempt to create a database started rather late and was hampered by resource problems. The need for such a service had, however, already become evident. In the Monitoring Report we recorded how, by March, staff from the British Red Cross and World Vision had begun to compile their own lists of tent distributions in order to avoid duplication. By the time the DEC database was established other databases had also been compiled.

113. The excellent work of the convenor of DEC meetings, Chris Cattaway of SCF, has demonstrated the need for information management, and also that it is time-consuming, especially in the first few weeks. We propose that a DEC Liaison Officer should be present during the first few weeks to exchange names and addresses between DEC members, provide public information about the DEC (especially to government and the media) and ensure that member agencies have access to and understand DEC documents and procedures.

114. The official government co-ordination body, the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority, reported to us that not a single international NGO had shared information with them. SCF pointed out that they made great efforts to liaise with government, and suggest that the problem may be internal communications. For many months SCF negotiated plans for reconstructing public buildings with officials at District level only to find out that a parallel set of discussions had been going on at State level with UNICEF. SCF had to start negotiations all over again.

115. Co-ordination with government requires persistence and persistence implies resources for constantly travelling to different offices and locations. The DEC could improve its efficiency by handling the flow of general information in a more collective manner.

Conclusions: Principle Two

116. Assessment by DEC members appears to be well short of the standard expected under Sphere and the Red Cross Code. This led to deficiencies of strategic analysis. DEC documentation should be adjusted to encourage better assessment and planning.

117. Discrimination is caused by prejudice or lack of information. DEC agencies come with their own set of prejudices regarding focus on age groups and gender, but these were generally perceived to be acceptable –with the caution that need must always be the prime issue. A prejudice in favour of rural areas has led the DEC members into a deviation. If DEC agencies had undertaken strategic reviews a few weeks after the disaster they would have picked up on that, and also on the relative neglect of areas furthest from the epicentre.

118. Lack of information arose because of deficiencies in communication between agencies. A very considerable step forward was taken by creating a forum of DEC members. This now needs to be taken forward.

119. **Learning points.**

- Assessment by DEC members is not sufficiently broad-based, strategic and consultative. Further work is needed on the minimum standards for assessment and to integrate this into DEC systems.
- DEC members made a false assumption that needs in urban areas would be adequately addressed by government.
- People shared the Red Cross Code view that ultimately need alone should be the criterion for selection but many thought that positive discrimination was necessary. Discrimination by gender, age and occupation was found to be more acceptable than discrimination by caste, religion and politics.
- Caste-based NGOs do not make appropriate partners, and at most should be part of a much wider network of relationships.
- Management of information is given inadequate attention and resources. Deficiencies led to considerable duplication in the relief phase.
- Overall, co-ordination was wrongly perceived as the hosting of meetings rather than the collection and analysis of information.
- Co-ordination by the UN should not be relied upon as an adequate mechanism.
- The Abhiyan co-ordination process should be evaluated.
- The DEC co-ordination meetings in Gujarat represent a positive step forward and now need to be transformed into an information management programme.
- DEC members were not sufficiently persistent in their liaison with government.

5.3. Red Cross Principle Three: Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.

Key Issues: Religion, politics

120. **Religion.** Three of the DEC agencies (Christian Aid, Tearfund and World Vision) are explicitly Christian. The question arises whether they complied with the Code. We found no evidence of any problem. This is important because the status of the Christian minority in the State is sensitive and any violation of the Code could have had serious consequences.

121. Our survey revealed a case, unconnected with the DEC, where a Christian group had built houses for Christians only and given an option for others to convert to Christianity if they wanted a house. This group was requested to leave the village. Perhaps such events occur only on a very small scale. The number of Christians in the affected area is very small indeed. In Kutch District there are only 1,277 Christians according to census data. They are concentrated in Gandhidham where there are reported to be 12 churches. It is true that both Tearfund and World Vision based themselves in Gandhidham and in the initial relief phase it is likely that church-goers may have used their contacts to secure assistance –it would be surprising if they did not. It is also true that the staffing of those organisations is limited to Christians. But we found no evidence of bias in the allocation of DEC funds. No such allegation was made in our public opinion survey. On the contrary, World Vision was regarded as over-generous to everyone in their distributions!

122. Hindu organisations such as the RSS were highly active in the earthquake response and did little to disguise their preference for helping caste Hindus. They played a major role in directing aid. But with their links into the ruling Party (and reputation for genuinely good work) they were unchallenged. We found no connection between such groups and the DEC.

123. **Politics.** Inevitably there are connections between NGOs and politics. Often these are tacit, and change over time. Many of the NGOs working with DEC members are – as it happens- broadly 'Opposition' (Congress). But none of this need cause concern for donors. The main criticism of the DEC response in Gujarat was that it was not political enough, in the sense of engaging with the wider issues of the response, notably the tendency for government aid to benefit the better-off.

124. Some negotiated with government about their own schemes, but only a very limited number of NGO partners took on the core strategic role of acting as an intermediary between the people and the government. Oxfam engaged in advocacy but did not link this sufficiently closely to the perceptions and experiences of the affected people –probably because of Oxfam's fundamental lack of good local partnerships. The ActionAid/Christian Aid partner Unnati is an outstanding example of what could be done. By focusing on the neglected urban areas and working closely with people in informal settlements around Bhachau, they were able to bring about major changes in the process of reconstruction. Settlements which might otherwise have been wiped off the map were included in the plans and the people participated in decisions about the future.

Conclusions: Red Cross Principle Three

125. Discrimination by religion or politics has not been a problem in relation to this response. Fear of political bias should not prevent agencies responding to needs by using their influence on behalf of the poor to make a difference to the wider picture. In the context of such a massive government response, a greater focus on influencing and advocacy would have been appropriate.

126. **Learning Points:**

- Unnati (ActionAid) was able to identify an issue of crucial importance that had been neglected by other agencies. Their work should be studied further as an example of good practice.
- Advocacy without links into programme and wider involvement of the people is likely to be ineffective.

5.4. Red Cross Principle Four: We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

'In order to protect our independence we will seek to avoid dependence on a single funding source' –subtext.

127. This Principle has only limited application to the Gujarat earthquake. As already discussed (Principle One) DFID appears to have established a relationship with some members which makes it difficult for them to refuse to act as DFID's partners. In this case DFID's influence was to reduce the proportion of DEC funds used in the relief phase. The problem could be more serious where DEC members were seen to lack independence, or even be agents of the British Government.

Conclusion: Red Cross Principle Four.

128. The Red Cross Code offers a particularly useful tool to limit the danger described above but this is a case where the lack of indicators and monitoring systems might be a serious limitation.

5.5. Red Cross Principle Five: We shall respect culture and custom.

'We were told to stand in a queue to receive items. All castes had to stand together. The lower castes felt bad and couldn't stand with the higher castes, so couldn't get anything.' DEC survey.

Key themes: culture and discrimination, psycho-social projects

Culture and Discrimination.

129. Relief items were considered generally appropriate by people in the research project except in the case of clothing- *'Without exception communities felt the clothes distributed were not appropriate, particularly for women, the elderly, Muslims and men who wore traditional clothes.'*[34] Oxfam was among those that adapted rapidly to this issue, substituting locally made traditional clothes for those from outside and making a very appropriate link between relief and livelihoods.

[34] Survey Findings section 2.1.5.

130. The research found a widespread perception, even among the poorest people, that it was 'unacceptable' for all social groups to be catered for together, especially in feeding centres. The issue also arose in relation to new permanent housing schemes. Concern's partner Navsarjan challenged this attitude by adopting the pro-active position that anyone receiving their help must be prepared to take water from a Dalit.

131. The Red Cross Principle of 'respect for culture and custom' potentially contradicts Principle Three of non-discrimination. If discrimination is part of local culture and custom (and apparently accepted by the excluded groups) should it be respected? If women are not expected to take part in village meetings, should that be accepted? The Code reflects the realities of life in that Principles do not always converge on a simple solution.

132. Blunt insistence on Principles can lead to perverse results, but absence of Principles can lead to erosion of any values at all. In Gujarat, members of the higher castes (even if poor) sometimes opted out of such interventions, refusing to eat with and live next to lower caste community members. Sometimes they managed the process in such a way as to exclude other social groups. A more positive way of viewing the caste system would be as a way of ordering society to cope with risks and external threats. In return for giving services and accepting a lower social status, poorer people are entitled to protection from external threats and assistance during times of crisis. Although little of this rationale remains valid today, there is an element of truth in the argument that eroding caste may mean increasing future vulnerabilities – in contravention of Red Cross Principle Eight.

133. Our analysis of targeting issues under Principle Two shows that people in the earthquake area share a range of views on the 'culture-versus-discrimination' debate as they do in the West. The situation is changing rapidly. The presence of one of India's most modern ports in Kutch, the expansion of Gandhidham as a major trading centre and the steady expansion of modern industry is bringing the effects of globalisation to the remotest villages. The old certainties of caste and status are breaking down.

134. Where they come into opposition with each other the Code Principles have to be ranked. They appear to be in an order of priority, although this is not explicitly stated. The exact sequence of priority may be affected by circumstances and the values of an agency. Taking the current order, the humanitarian imperative (the priority of human need) as well as the principle of non-discrimination take precedence over respect for culture and custom.

135. Where a Principle is given lower priority than another, affirmative action can be taken to reduce the negative effects in relation to that principle. For example, HelpAge India discriminated by providing food for old people, but ensured that there was enough so that other members of the family could benefit.

Psycho-social' projects.

136. 'Psycho-social' interventions can be critiqued on the basis that they represent an imposition of Western individualistic culture and psychiatric science on very different cultures, where the issues of grief and suffering are bound by strong social and family traditions. There has been much criticism of this practice, especially in the Balkans[35].

[35] Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs *'Evaluation of Norwegian Support to psycho-social projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Caucasus'* March 1999.

137. A number of agencies have offered counselling to people 'traumatised' by the earthquake. Of course, most people are not suffering from any medical condition but simply experiencing normal processes of shock and grief. Medical interventions may even be harmful in disrupting social processes.

138. Some DEC members turned to medical institutions for solutions and there was some loose talk about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. A staff member with one of ActionAid's partners asserted that those she was 'counselling' were far more in need of practical assistance than 'a shoulder to cry on'. They wanted advice about government compensation, prosthetics and money for funerals. Where people needed personal support they turned to their own community rather than to outsiders.

139. The evaluators invited the prominent psychiatrist, Dr Derek Summerfield[36], to review ActionAid's report on their psycho-social activity. He wrote-

> *'There is no literature to show that victims of disasters –manmade or "natural"- do better overall when drawn into projects addressing their "mental health" as an issue apart…. It's unclear whether they {ActionAid} use the language of the trauma school, "psychological counselling" etc, because they see these as methods proven elsewhere or whether it's just a gloss (for funders etc) on what they are doing anyway because such language has come to be routinely deployed –almost as an aesthetic issue- in situations of catastrophe…*'

140. ActionAid viewed its psycho-social work within a social context and linked it to public information and advocacy work which brought practical benefits to people in distress. As such it was an example of good practice in an area where there is a real risk of cultural imposition.

Conclusions: Principle Five

141. There is a problem for aid agencies that they do not want to impose their own views about culture and custom but recognise that culture and custom are imbued with power relationships, and these are of concern. The people themselves seem to be ambivalent. They are uneasy about outsiders confronting social divisions, yet recognise that they are unjust. This Red Cross Principle is likely to clash with others and therefore judgments can only be made by establishing an order of priority. This might vary a little between agencies and situations. The current order should be taken as the starting point.

142. Learning Points:

- Medical approaches to grief and suffering should be treated with caution.
- Aid agencies should not separate psycho-social projects from other interventions in the social and advocacy sectors.
- Great care is needed with the language of psycho-social response.
- ActionAid's work offers an example of good practice.

[36] Summerfield contributed to Save the Children's critique of psycho-social projects- 'Rethinking the Trauma of War' Free Association Books 1998.

5.6. Red Cross Principle Six: We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.

Key Issues: Shelter, operational and non-operational approaches

143. **Shelter.** Over a million houses were destroyed or severely damaged by the earthquake. By favouring the principle of 'owner-driven' reconstruction the government has avoided many of the pitfalls that beset the Latur operation and enabled the reconstruction process to proceed relatively fast. Some credit for this is probably due to Praveen Pardeshi of UNDP (former District Collector in Latur) and to the World Bank/ADB team which assessed rehabilitation needs[37]. DEC agencies did not play an active role in that crucial debate and were much more varied in their response to (or knowledge of) the lessons from the past.

144. The basis of the Government intervention in Gujarat was a graded set of financial inputs related to the extent of loss. The amount of compensation was proportional to the value of the damaged property, and so basically the rich got more. The effect was exacerbated because more powerful people were better able to manipulate the system. Some very impressive houses have come up rapidly, while many people still live in tents. The inequality inherent in the government's approach has been remarked on by some NGOs, but the opportunity for a concerted effort by civil society to bring more equity into the process has been missed. Not enough has been done to help poorer individuals to secure their rights in this difficult process.

145. The merit of the core government programme is that it builds on local capacities. But there is an alternative scheme intended for villages where there has been total destruction and the people are ready to move to a new site. They can enter into an agreement by which an external agency 'adopts' and rebuilds the entire village. In that case the owners are expected to hand back their compensation to that agency and provide half the costs of the new housing. To make the scheme work everyone in a village has to agree, a formal agreement must be signed and the external agency must provide the public buildings such as school and health centre.

146. Except for CARE, those DEC agencies which initially engaged in 'adoption' have abandoned the attempt to collect the government compensation from the people. The process proved too difficult, and they have decided to pay for the entire housing project. Practically all 'adoption' schemes are now run entirely by the outside agency without the attempt to obtain a cash contribution from the people. In fact such agencies have begun to compete with each other to show their generosity. The owners get a new 'seismic-safe' house and also keep the compensation money. This adds to the overall effect of economic polarisation and undermines the principle of building on local capacities.

147. The most useful intervention by DEC agencies was in providing temporary shelter. Single-room constructions with bamboo and tile roofs have been particularly effective in helping people to escape from the squalor of tents and tarpaulins, but without the expense of permanent reconstruction. Those provided by Abhiyan (SCF) and Behavioural Science Centre (ActionAid) are designed so that the materials can be used for the reconstruction of a permanent house when required.

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37 *'Gujarat Earthquake Recovery Program'* March 14, 2001

148. It is estimated that only 4.5% (and absolute maximum 10%) of permanent re-housing will be done by private sources such as NGOs.[38] These 'adoption' projects are carried out by contractors rather than by the people themselves. By far the majority will be done by the people themselves with whatever external assistance they can obtain. A few DEC agencies have offered specific inputs to owners reconstructing their own houses. Concern offers modest amounts of materials and funds and HelpAge has provided funds for an additional room for an old person. ActionAid has provided materials and on-site support. CARE and others have trained masons.

149. With limited experience in the area, Concern made a good overall analysis but was excessively cautious in its approach, reducing the proposals from its partners to what they thought was a reasonable input. An old woman in Surendranagar District was given Rs15,000 (£215) by the Concern partner Navsarjan but said that she had to borrow Rs50,000 (£714) from the moneylender in order to complete the house. To an extent this was her own decision. She, a Dalit, had decided that the house must be constructed strictly according to local culture and custom –with stone bases for the pillars and carved lintels. She could have built more cheaply, but Concern's estimate that a seismic-safe house could be constructed for Rs 20,000 (£308) is far below other estimates, and half that of the common UNDP/Abhiyan 'minimum' design. The woman's indebtedness now undermines her ability to escape from the clutches of the village elite, and Navsarjan's objective of empowering Dalits.

150. In another Concern project, villagers were given 5 bags of cement and required to show proof of proper use before receiving a second 5 bags. The local NGO had originally asked for the full costs of reconstruction but Concern had asked them to propose a much smaller project. The people had to arrange transport of their allocation at their own cost. When the DEC research team visited the area, the villagers said that they had to spend too much time and money in proportion to the benefit, and that in any case the input was far below the minimum needed to build a house, estimated at 40-50 bags. Several people returned the cement (at their own transport cost) saying that they could not use it. Building on local capacities requires realistic assessment, and an element of trust in the views of people and partners.

151. But the most serious problems were in the 'village adoption' scheme. CARE and Tearfund used DEC funds for 'adoption' schemes. Other DEC members, World Vision for example, supported 'adoption' projects but did not use DEC funds for them. The evidence suggests that members should have been even more wary of abandoning the principle of building on local capacities. As our shelter consultant put it, most of the new settlements are culturally and aesthetically 'pathetic'. It is contrary to the Red Cross principle to promote contractor-driven processes of building when options for self-help were available.

152. There are a few cases where villagers wanted to relocate to completely new sites and live in houses built in rows like the 'quarters' for mill-workers or married servicemen. But the offer of gigantic sums of money may have coloured their views. The result may not be houses and communities but simply assets. The lesson from the Latur earthquake is that such settlements are likely to remain empty, or will be sub-let to others. The owners will meanwhile rebuild their original house, in the way that they like, regarding the 'adopted' house as a free gift that could not be refused.

[38] See shelter report.

153. The use of contractors has negated what little positive benefit these projects might have had. If local labour had been used millions of pounds would have flowed into the local economy. Injustices in the use of labour could have been more easily challenged. Opportunities for skill development could have been built into the plans. Instead, at least 25% of the funds[39] will have gone to the contractors as profit, while the rest will go to migrant labour and suppliers of materials.

154. A further criticism of these housing projects is that they do not reflect the local concept of housing as a function of both shelter and livelihood. The home is not simply a source of protection from the elements but also a safe storage area, a pen for animals, a place to process agricultural products and a base for self-employment in crafts and services. In many ways the house is more a centre for cottage industry than a shelter. Yet housing schemes approach the issue as if people were industrial workers who go out to work and simply need a space to eat and sleep. These faults may arise from failures of consultation –and from preconceptions by aid managers. These new houses will not enhance local livelihoods. In extreme cases the effect will be negative. The new site may be far from the place of work, and may engulf agricultural land- in some cases the common grazing-land that had been used by the poor.

155. Instead of building their response on local capacities –notably the opportunities for employment and the rights of poor people to compensation from government- agencies have focused on providing external solutions. By putting so much effort into these mistaken schemes, they have missed the opportunity to focus on what was really needed: support to the process of self-help reconstruction –not just by providing materials but by securing entitlements. Although ActionAid was not alone in supporting self-help housing it was the only DEC member to give adequate emphasis to social mobilisation and advocacy in order to secure government compensation for vulnerable people.

156. ActionAid also picked up another important issue -the need to focus on particularly vulnerable people such as widows and (to a limited extent) disabled people. Hundreds of thousands of claims and payments were being processed –in fact over a million. The government insisted on making payment by cheque and few people had bank accounts. There was a huge demand for help with forms and procedures. The Gujarat-based NGOs Abhiyan and SEWA played major roles, but not with the specific support of their DEC partners. The DEC members focused too much on what they were doing themselves rather than on the wider picture.

157. **Operational and non-operational approaches.** Gujarat is famed in India for its traditions of social work and remarkable depth of civil society. Under the Red Cross Principle of building on local capacities there was little justification for agencies running their own projects –being operational. Up to a point an exception can be made for the British Red Cross Society because the local societies happened to be very weak and the Red Cross does not normally work with other organisations. This left BRCS with a gap after the relief phase which they found very difficult to fill.

[39] Estimate by our consultant, Kirtee Shah.

158. It is very surprising that Oxfam, with a presence in Gujarat for more than twenty years, made so little use of its long-term partners. Respected NGOs such as Gram Vikas Trust (Dwarka) and SETU (Ahmedabad) contacted Oxfam immediately after the disaster only to be told that it was not working outside a small area of Kutch, and only with partners connected with Oxfam's long-term drought programme. The internationally-renowned union of self-employed women –SEWA- was invited for consultations with Oxfam, along with a number of other very distinguished organisations but as SEWA's Director put it- 'nothing came of it'. They were not informed further about Oxfam's thinking. By contrast, HelpAge with limited contacts in Gujarat, was able to develop a link with the highly-respected 'Sadvichar Parivar' – an extraordinary NGO which resembles a trade union of the elderly –and a number of other NGOs into an effective partnership.

159. The assertiveness of some of the local NGOs clearly troubled some of the DEC agencies. SCF enjoyed huge advantages through its association with the remarkable Abhiyan network, but the relationship became strained over the implementation of the temporary housing project. SCF was concerned about inadequacies of implementation. Abhiyan thought that SCF was too much focused on results rather than process. What Abhiyan saw as an opportunity to work with members on a common problem, SCF saw as a failure. What SCF saw as normal professional procedures Abhiyan saw as meaningless bureaucracy. SCF had bent its own rules in favour of Abhiyan to such an extent that our financial consultant became highly concerned. But without waiting for more debate Abhiyan turned to UNDP as a less demanding funder and SCF agreed a parting of the ways. In the end, thanks to SCF's patient project manager and Abhiyan's excellent leadership, the whole process came to be an important learning experience on both sides. But ultimately there is no doubt that SCF's real achievement in the Gujarat response was its link with Abhiyan and the temporary housing project.

160. **Rapid staff turnover.** In this debate, Abhiyan recognised that in quieter times it would have learnt more from SCF's 'professionalism'. It attributed many of the problems to 'a stream of inexperienced staff' below the project manager. Other DEC agencies have been much more severely affected by this problem of staff shortages and inexperienced staff, preventing them from reaching a good understanding of the local situation and partners. Concern, Merlin and Oxfam have all employed three different programme co-ordinators in the earthquake response so far –none of them having any significant previous experience in India- yet (as our financial management review shows) costing four to eight times as much as locally-recruited managers. By contrast, HelpAge and World Vision's senior staff have remained the same through the assessment, planning and implementation processes. Lack of consistency makes it difficult to develop an understanding of partners, and this exacerbates the issue of building on local capacity.

161. One major reason why Oxfam could not tackle the caste bias of its principal partner was because of staff turnover. Added to rapid change there was no hand-over process between two project managers and the time to address the issue was missed. This also reflects a dysfunction between Oxfam's field operation run by the Humanitarian Department in Oxford and the field staff based in Gujarat, Delhi and Dhaka. Oxfam's systems were in disarray because of rapid change and the absence or transfer of senior managers. Without leadership Oxfam never developed a proper strategy and without good strategy could not attract good staff. Appalling living conditions at Oxfam's compound were a further factor. These problems developed into a vicious circle that could have been avoided.

Conclusions: Principle Six

162. DEC members have not paid sufficient attention to this Red Cross Principle. They regarded building on local capacities as an optional extra or even a side-issue rather than –as it should be- an integral part of the response, related to Principle Seven, reducing future vulnerabilities.

164. **Learning Points:**

Shelter

- Clear lessons from the Latur earthquake seem to have been overlooked by agencies that engaged in village 'adoption'. They need to examine their learning systems.
- In a context where government is the major player it is not enough for agencies to focus on their own projects. They have an obligation to engage with the wider process.
- That role lies specifically in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.
- The concept of shelter needs to be examined critically in each situation. In this case shelter should not have been separated from livelihood issues.
- The default position should be to help people rebuild their own houses.
- There are opportunities in reconstruction programmes to build on local capacity by employing local labour rather than use contractors.

Local Capacity

- The operational approach is not favoured under the Red Cross Code.
- The lack of local knowledge of expatriate staff was compounded by high rates of turnover and produced seriously negative results.

5.7. Red Cross Principle Seven: Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.

'No one asked us how we wanted to participate, or if we wanted to.'
'We were consulted so that agencies could get the information to complete their paperwork only'. DEC Survey

Key Issues: consultation; participation; involvement; information;

163. In the DEC research, 59% of people who spoke about participation in relation to their interactions with NGOs felt dissatisfied[40]. Our report states- *'when communities were consulted they often felt that their views were not incorporated into the programme… The prevailing reason cited was that agencies had designed programmes prior to discussions with communities.'* Although there was more discussion about shelter than any other issue, only in 3 examples (out of 175 interventions) did researchers find that communities felt they had influenced the design or size of housing construction.

[40] For full analysis see survey Section 2.2.

164. Some examples of good practice by DEC members have emerged from our survey. In distributing blankets, Concern had asked women to form a committee, allowed them to identify the most needy people and then to distribute the blankets themselves. World Vision had negotiated the location of cattle-troughs with the community. A weaving project started by Unnati (ActionAid) was praised because, after discussions, the weavers were taken to another area to select their own cotton and then given assistance with marketing.

165. But the Red Cross Principle demands more than DEC agencies generally offered. It is not simply a matter of having a role, but participating in management. Even in the examples given it was not the beneficiaries who decided the sector of involvement or the broad outlines of the project. Our finding is that levels of participation and consultation were far below the expectations of the community, and that the Principle of involving beneficiaries in the management of relief aid has been almost completely overlooked.

166. **Participation.** To quote from the DEC Survey: *'Communities felt participation in interventions was on agencies' terms only, occurring when it was to their advantage, for example in order to reduce costs or to provide community labour. In the majority of interventions, participation was not felt to be advantageous to participants, or even considered desirable.'* Arbitrary requirements for a 'people's contribution' could have a negative effect. When people were asked to collect materials such as tents, sacks of cement etc from the organisation's office it was often those most in need who could not go. But people had little hesitation in rejecting aid if it was not helpful. A degree of self-selection occurred especially in shelter interventions, notably over issues of financial contribution, relocation, size and design of houses. Donors selected villagers who agreed with them, and vice versa. But this may not have been the best method. It was certainly not the kind of partnership envisaged in the Code.

167. **Consultation.** There was particular resentment over the fact that agencies might ask questions about particular types of assistance but not about what sector of assistance was most important. This may reflect problems arising from Sphere-type assessments by sector –an issue we have examined under Principle Two. As a result people felt that livelihoods issues had not been sufficiently addressed- 'although communities continuously and strenuously asserted that this was their primary need.'

168. People felt that there was limited consultation on design and size of houses. As already stated, only in 3 examples out of 175 interventions did communities feel that they had any influence. Where they made proposals only small changes were made. In one unfortunate case EFICOR (Tearfund) consulted extensively about the shape of the house but then reversed the view of the people after receiving 'expert' advice from outside..

169. Often the general community was not consulted but only leaders. Confidence in the Sarpanch (village leader) was varied. In the relief stage the government used relief committees[41] but these were not properly constituted. The DEC research indicates that the vulnerable groups were often left out of these consultations. The level of consultation was perceived to be related to the level of previous contact –local NGOs did better than operational organisations or outsiders.

[41] A reason for this was the lack of panchayats because of the cancelled elections (see political background).

170. In a very few cases, agencies compensated for some of these deficiencies by undertaking specific research on community responses. The British Red Cross commissioned an important study of social issues underlying the use of pre-schools[42]. Considering the overall lack of information about the area, more research would have improved the response.

171. **Involvement.** The people's criticism that decisions had already been taken by agencies before consultation took place reflects the fact that they were not involved in the management of aid as required by this Red Cross Principle. Perhaps it is early days yet, and the issue will be addressed in the future.

172. The level of involvement in shelter projects was generally higher than for other programmes. To an extent this is inevitable because of the nature of the transaction. People have to agree to move house, and they may have to agree to hand over their compensation money. The number of cases where communities were informed only, or not at all, dropped over time, but it still remained at 10% of interventions at the time of the survey in September. The only agency to make a strong effort on the issue of involvement was ActionAid which instituted a policy of transparency and invited partners and people to take part in consultative processes. It would be useful to study this experience in more depth, and particularly to assess whether more impact had resulted from it.

173. **Information.** There were frequent complaints about lack of information. At the most basic level people expressed the view that they did not know how participants of housing programmes had been selected. They said that booklets and videos were distributed (especially on seismic safety) but they did not have the time or capacity to work out what was meant. They needed much more intensive guidance and training. It was also a problem that the materials supplied were often different from those in the booklets or training.

174. Much of this information was aimed at individuals trying to make the most of the assistance on offer. If such information was not deliberately targeted to the poorest groups it might even exacerbate the processes of social division. Not all agencies recognised this and ensured that information was targeted to the poor and part of a wider process of empowerment.

Conclusions: Principle Seven

175. This Principle is one that agencies should strive towards in the rehabilitation phase and should certainly be achieved in reconstruction. In Gujarat it is rather too early to make definitive judgments. There are examples of good intentions as well as good practice but generally this Principle was not firmly on the agenda of DEC members. Only ActionAid had a conscious policy relating to transparency, consultation and involvement. The question whether this Principle ultimately has impact on the lives of those in need should be followed up in the last stages of the DEC response, now continuing to July 2002, and perhaps also by the Humanitarian Accountability Project.

[42] '*Towards Understanding Key Social Issues: British Red Cross Reconstruction Project, Gujarat, India'* August 2001.

177. **Learning Points:**

- The view of the people affected is that there have been deficiencies in participation, consultation, involvement and information.
- Participation is perceived to be driven by the agency's own interests.
- Consultation is viewed as superficial, and without result.
- Research can be a legitimate and important part of consultation.
- Information has not necessarily been targeted to the poorest and may have exacerbated economic divisions.

5.8. Red Cross Principle Eight: Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.

'Everything we had been given is now gone. When the food was eaten we had nothing.'
'Earthquake proofing is fine if you have the means –but what about us poor? What are we to do when we can't even afford roofing over our families?'

persons in DEC Survey

Key Issues: seismic safety, disaster preparedness; NGO partnerships; health

176. **Seismic Safety.** In a section on the Gujarat earthquake, the World Disaster Report 2001 asserts- 'In a State that is not a high-risk region for earthquakes, where annual per capita income is about 11,000 rupees (US$250), imposing formal building codes to make homes earthquake-proof is not realistic.'[43]

177. Agencies in the field, including all DEC agencies, have taken the view that they cannot take such a risk. The calculations about the possibility of further massive damage from earthquakes (see Background section) are difficult to balance against costs. Left to themselves, people are unlikely to include standard seismic safety features because the cost of this for an average house is about 20,000 rupees – nearly two years' income. Agencies have not had to face up to the issue in quite the same way as home-owners do; and hence tend, too readily, to see the general reluctance to build seismic-safe houses as a sign of ignorance or folly.

178. As our consultant Kirtee Shah has elaborated in his report[44] it is not just the cost of steel bars and concrete frames (recommended to be inserted at three levels, and with connecting vertical pillars to make a 'cage' construction) it is also the inconvenience and cost of the process. Skilled masons will not wait around while the concrete sets but move on to another job. Most villagers told us that they would like seismic safety in their houses but could not afford it. The economics are such that it is cheaper to bribe the engineer who comes to make a check than pay for the cement rings. Our survey reveals a lot of interest and demand for information but it is generally true that people have only adopted 'seismic safety' when made to do so as a condition of assistance.

[43] IFRC World Disaster Report 2001 p21
[44] See Volume Three

179. This is not so true of the rich. The enormous disparities between levels of government compensation (some people got fifty times as much as others) mean that the rich have a much better chance of adopting safety features. We met more than one village leader who was proud to show us a fully 'seismic safe' house whereas everyone else was rebuilding in mud and rough stones. The overall outcome of the present programmes will be to widen the gap between rich and poor in terms of future vulnerabilities. In any future earthquake it will be the poor who suffer both because they have not adopted seismic safety and also because they may be burdened by debts to make up for the deficiencies in support from agencies. The underlying issue is the inequity and lack of access to government compensation.

180. Kirtee Shah also points out that 'excessive mystification' by professionals has led to over-caution. It is not possible to fully define seismic-safety since nobody knows quite how severe a future earthquake might be. Even the three concrete rings would not be enough in certain conditions. He considers that EFICOR (Tearfund) should have been more robust in relation to the 'expert' advice which insisted on a rectangular house as the only 'seismic safe' solution. The deeper problem is that EFICOR (Tearfund) had got into the wrong strategic position. They had taken full responsibility for the reconstruction of three villages out of over 1,000 in Kutch. In our view could have achieved much more by helping people with information, advice and subsidised materials.

181. **Disaster preparedness.** Building seismic-safe houses is not the only approach to disaster preparedness for the future. The permanent housing created in the 'adoption' schemes such as EFICOR's may reduce vulnerability to physical shocks such as earthquakes and cyclones but they may reduce capacity if they undermine the functioning of the community. If people are put into houses regardless of preferences for neighbours, or in configurations of caste which they do not like, the sense of cohesion which was such a huge feature of the response in January will be much reduced. Neighbours in such a 'community' may not even help each other out of the rubble as they did before. Livelihoods may be undermined by distance from the fields, or use of agricultural land for building.

182. The DEC research is particularly interesting in showing that the affected people had been thinking deeply about the issue of reducing future vulnerability, and along rather different lines from the aid agencies. In their view the right kind of leadership was felt to be the most important capacity of the community by far. People felt that the opportunities for corruption had weakened that capacity compared with what it was before the earthquake. Other sources of human capacity included youth (rescue work), teachers and postmen (specifically for help filling forms) and shop-keepers (giving credit). Helpful institutions were the youth group, relief committee and the SEWA women's co-operative. The flour-mill was especially important for grinding relief grains and also giving free flour during the initial relief period. In physical terms vehicles and phones were rated the most important asset. In general people felt that these assets had increased in number and importance since the earthquake, especially because there were more phones. Their view was that the role of external agencies was limited and that communities were becoming more used to coping with disasters. Actual capacity had increased more in terms of mental preparedness than physical assets. People perceived considerable importance in the role of information. Their contact with government and relief agencies had increased their capacity to help themselves. They particularly valued information on contact addresses, housing designs and about the government rehabilitation packages.

183. Women stated that their capacity and confidence had increased due to their involvement in the response and contact with village leaders, teachers, the pre-school manager and outside agencies. Again, the crucial issue seems to be acquiring knowledge and information.

184. Specific projects were thought to be particularly important for building capacity. Communities had become more aware of the importance of savings and insurance schemes. Others stressed the need for water-harvesting projects.

185. There were several examples of outside agencies undermining local capacity. The relocation of communities to new housing projects was seen as particularly damaging. One agency trained masons but then took them out of the village to work on their project, reducing the community's own capacity to rebuild. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the use of outside contractors rather than local labour and resources. People suggested that outside agencies could do more to spread information about contacts, help to update the ration card system and provide telephones so that the community could better access information.

186. People proposed that each village should have a community centres equipped with first aid, basic essentials and a phone. People saw their capacity to resist disaster in terms of having the right people and relationships in the village rather than in terms of seismic safety. They wanted representative leaders, lists of contacts and people who had been trained in relevant skills such as first aid. The most general request was for communications and information. Women stated that they wanted more information on insurance and access to credit schemes.

187. **NGO partnerships.** Developing the capacity of local NGOs is an important way of reducing vulnerabilities. Agencies which chose to be operational were too inclined to argue purely in terms of efficiency of relief and tend to ignore the long-term impact of a successful partnership. Abhiyan was not simply an agency useful in constructing temporary housing but could have been nurtured by SCF for their unique role in co-ordinating disaster responses. By not making good use of its NGO links, Oxfam's contribution to reducing future vulnerabilities has been greatly reduced.

188. **Health.** A number of agencies provided good responses in terms of curative care. Work by Merlin and HelpAge was described in positive terms by villagers in the DEC research. The attempt to increase community capacity through health education programmes was less effective. Staff from Merlin and Oxfam were not able to identify significant impact arising from such programmes.

Conclusions: Principle Eight.

189. With a requirement for reconstruction of US$3.5[45] billion for reconstruction to improved standards –and US$2billion already available[46]- the physical input of NGOs (including the US$30m from the DEC) was of much less significance than their capacity to make the larger process work for the benefit of the poor. If DEC members had done so they would not only have acted more efficiently but also made a much greater contribution to reducing future vulnerabilities.

[45] UNDP 'Gujarat Transition Recovery Team: An Update' September 2001. UNDP estimates that a further US$2.5billion would be required for full earthquake and cyclone proofing.
[46] About half coming from the World Bank and ADB.

190. Village people seem to have accepted as a premise that seismic safety would either not happen or would have limited effectiveness in protecting them from shocks. They focused much more on social development that aid agencies did.

191. Learning Points.

- Seismic safety cannot be precisely defined.
- The people saw 'reducing future vulnerabilities' in more social terms that the aid agencies.
- The ability to assert entitlements in relation to government is an especially important way of reducing vulnerability.
- Building and maintaining NGO partnerships is a way of reducing vulnerabilities.
- Health education programmes have not resulted in demonstrable impact.

5.9. Red Cross Principle Nine: We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.

'We don't know the names of some of the NGOs that came. We asked every day. But names were given in English, or they couldn't speak our language, so we never knew.'

Key themes: DEC research, Financial accountability

192. **DEC research.** The views of the 'survivors of the earthquake' indicate some concern about levels of transparency by DEC agencies. With some exceptions it appears that agencies have not done enough to explain who they are. There are positive examples of open discussion with NGO partners, notably Christian Aid's consultation in Ahmedabad in August. We suggest that the issue of transparency should be addressed in more detail in a future evaluation.

193. **Financial Accountability.** In this evaluation we were specifically asked to examine the management of financial resources by DEC members. The nine key findings are-

- There was a mismatch between the amount of funds raised, the DEC time limit for expenditure and the needs of beneficiaries. Many member agencies had more money available than they could responsibly spend in nine months.
- Resources have been allocated between member agencies with limited efficiency.
- Member agencies have allocated resources internally with limited levels of efficiency.
- Member agencies have operated with different levels of cost efficiency.
- Financial administration and control has been of a robust professional standard.
- NGO partners have maintained professional levels of financial administration, control and accountability.
- NGOs have been accountable to the DEC for the funds that they have received. Some have also given financial account to beneficiaries.
- NGOs have involved programme managers in financial management. It has not been 'left to the accountant'.
- Field and head office staff have not always understood the DEC's role and operating procedures.

194. The Code does not simply specify assessment at the outset but enjoins 'regular assessments of the impact of disaster assistance' –a concept which goes beyond Sphere[47]. It requires agencies to 'report, in an open fashion, upon the impact of our work, and the factors limiting or enhancing that impact.' Overall we found the level of reports sent to the DEC by members was rather poor. Many appeared to be written by people with no direct contact with the work on the ground.

195. There should be a thorough overhaul of the reporting systems within the DEC, and we are pleased that such a process is already under way in the revision of the DEC Handbook. The main objective should be to integrate the DEC's requirements with the actual planning and reporting cycles of the agencies. DEC reports would then become a record of debates and discussions closer to the Code's description. Secondly, in the interests of greater transparency, the reports should be summarised on a regular basis to provide donors with an overview of expenditures and issues –and these should be posted on the DEC website

Conclusions: Principle Nine

196. DEC agencies have done well in relation to financial accountability to donors but less well in terms of open reporting and analysis of impact. A number of agencies have not yet done internal evaluations. They should certainly do so by July 2002. Oxfam deserves credit for carrying out a very thorough internal evaluation and making it available to the DEC.

197. DEC systems of reporting need to be aligned to real planning cycles and made more widely available to the donor public. The issue of accountability to the people in need remains unclear. The DEC research on public opinions has given the opportunity for views to be expressed but the DEC does not have defined norms for transparency and accountability.

198. **Learning points.**

- The DEC research indicates that people expect higher levels of transparency from aid agencies.
- Regular assessment of impact –with transparency about the results- would be a step forward towards meeting the requirements of this Principle.

5.10 Red Cross Principle Ten: In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects.

199. A thorough study of this issue has not been attempted; it was not specifically required by the Terms of Reference. A superficial review suggests some issues of concern and that the issue should receive greater attention in a future evaluation.

[47] See Appendix

200. At first sight the DEC's core image of an old man in front of a shattered house is reasonably positive but closer inspection reveals that he has his head bowed and hands raised in the traditional gesture of supplication used by beggars in India. The Nick Ross feedback film for TV with its 'thank you' parade appeared to be stage-managed, suggesting that the film was designed to show viewers what they might want to hear rather than what people in India really wanted to say. In both cases the issue is about the dignity of the people affected by the disaster.

201. By contrast HelpAge India's booklet 'Gujarat: January 26, 2001' shows a pair of happy-looking (and only moderately old) musicians on its front cover, and has as its main (and spectacular) illustration a very dignified shoemaker with the caption in very small letters- 'providing livelihoods' –all very dignified. The sensitive selection of images reflects HelpAge's comprehensive research programme into attitudes towards older people[48]. This reveals that older people see their needs in disasters very much in terms of livelihoods whereas aid agency staff perceive their needs as food, isolation, health and psycho-social support.

202. In general, we found that materials prepared in the UK were more likely to present people as 'hopeless objects' or 'traumatised' than those coming from India[49]. This may reflect an emphasis on fundraising in the UK, but leads to inconsistency in relation to the Code. It may also reflect general trends in the media. Much of the initial reporting about the earthquake focused on the British 'search-and-rescue' team. While thousands of people were extracted from the rubble by neighbours and government staff, the UK media focused on the 69-strong British team which rescued just 7 people. It is in resisting such distortions that the broadcasting authorities can perhaps best assist the DEC to overcome the public misconceptions.

Conclusion: Principle Ten

203. A detailed analysis of images would need to define the meaning of 'dignified'. We suggest the distinction is essentially between 'having a positive role in society which gives respect' and 'being a burden to society and seeking pity'. If donors are encouraged to respond to negative images they are indirectly being encouraged to develop racist attitudes –perceptions of people in poorer countries as beggars.It would be a beneficial process if donors could be encouraged to respond to images of self-confidence in the face of disaster and more focus on livelihoods rather than relief. This would also develop better understanding of the need for appropriate time-scales.

204. Learning points.

- The Code should act as an important constraint on media images relating to disasters.
- Research about the attitudes of the 'victims' themselves may lead to better images.
- Positive images are those that reflect roles in society, rather than helplessness (and uselessness).

[48] 'Older People in disasters and humanitarian crises: guidelines for best practice'.

[49] Materials such as those from Aparajita (VHAI/Christian Aid) in Orissa suggest that this is generally the case.

6. General Conclusions

'Placing a six-month spending window on emergency funds, it was trapped by imposing a time limit on something that can't always be rushed'

World Disasters Report 2001 on the DEC.[50]

The DEC Response

205. **Analysis.** Relief items were unnecessarily sent from abroad, expatriates were used where local staff could have done better. The larger DEC members used funds from DFID and ECHO for the relief phase rather than funds from the DEC, and in the end only 13% of DEC funds were spent on relief[51]. Some DEC members did not recognise the particular characteristics of working with a strong and politically-charged government. The levels of assessment, strategy and analysis in most DEC members was poor. But some made a good strategic assessment, realised the importance of the government response and predicted the marginalisation of poorer people.

206. **Learning.** Agencies that had been present in India for many years reacted as if they had just arrived. Gujarat's remarkable plethora of NGOs was not used to full capacity. There was little emphasis on building local capacities and the ability of communities to cope with future disasters. Many of the weaknesses described in this report have been described in other DEC evaluations in other contexts. The issue of timescale has come up time and again. The poor level of assessment and strategy has also been remarked before.

207. Learning by aid agencies from previous earthquakes has been poor, and therefore mistakes were persistently repeated. Ignoring the past, aid agencies responded to the destruction of complex village infrastructures by attempting to build rows of concrete houses as if for factory workers. The main lesson from the Latur earthquake in India only eight years previously had been to help people rebuild their own houses in their own way.

208. **Working together.** Generally speaking, the international NGOs were less effective than the local ones, even in terms of accounting systems and reporting. Their analysis was considerably weaker. By working together the weaker links could have joined themselves to stronger ones, but this did not always happen. As a whole the DEC responded well, but some members did a lot better than others.

209. Evaluations have the benefit of hindsight and some of the issues that now seem obvious were not so obvious at the time. There were genuine dilemmas and difficulties, but many factors could have been understood by better analysis and strategy, together with more willingness to work with others. Some DEC agencies achieved massive impact while others did not. Overall the response was reasonably good, but the achievement of the best is counterbalanced by the failure of the worst.

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[50] Op cit p26. It continues *'Kosovo and Orissa saw huge amounts handed back, and some money had to be reprogrammed, a procedure that proved problematic. Clearly agencies need to communicate to public and government donors alike the field realities of disaster response'*

[51] See financial summary.

210. **Systems.** The DEC also suffered from certain institutional limitations. It is a successful fundraising mechanism and individual members may be able to integrate the DEC's input within longer-term policies, but the DEC timescale of nine months maximum for disaster response encourages quick involvement, shallow relationships and rapid departure. This may conceivably be appropriate in some situations but certainly not for Gujarat. Unfortunately the DEC lacked the mechanisms and collective culture to shift resources internally.

Overall Assessment

213. Measuring performance against the Red Cross Code we would assign the following scores (points out of ten) for the total DEC response, with the proviso that there were huge disparities between DEC members-

1. Humanitarian imperative comes first.	**5**
2. Aid is given regardless of race etc.	**8**
3. Religion and Politics	**9**
4. Independence from government Policy	**not applicable**
5. Culture and Custom	**6**
6. Build on local capacities	**5**
7. Involve beneficiaries	**4**
8. Reduce future vulnerabilities	**3**
9. Accountable to beneficiaries	**6**
Ditto to donors	**8**
10. Dignity in images	**5**
	Total 59

199. Dividing the total by ten (ten criteria) this gives an overall rating for the DEC response of 5.9 for this disaster. With suitable cautions, this figure could be used to compare with DEC responses to other disasters, or those of other agencies.

7. Recommendations

DEC members should-

- Ensure that consultation with the affected people can be integrated into planning rather than follow afterwards.
- Review their assessment procedures to ensure that the wider context is considered and that assessment feeds into the process of strategic review.
- Ensure that major lessons from previous disasters cannot be ignored.
- Recognise that local partnerships are likely to be more effective than external interventions.
- Recognise that the key to scaling up is not internal expansion but finding ways to work effectively with others.
- Use the Red Cross Code as a quality standard in programme planning.
- Develop indicators of good practice in relation to Red Cross Code Principles.
- Develop policies and procedures around the issue of transparency.
- Recognise the rights of public donors to expect collective responsibility for the efficient use of funds, and to have their understanding deepened.

The DEC should-

- Establish a timescale for Appeals of 18 months divided into two 9-month phases in which twice as much would be spent in the first phase as in the second.
- Regard the IOC mechanism only as a starting point for a self-assessment process which will be signed-off by senior managers.
- Establish the rules for such a procedure and empower the Chief Executive to monitor the process against the rules.
- Develop an information management strategy, drawing on lessons from previous emergencies.
- Field a Liaison Officer at the outset of an Appeal with a brief for information management.
- Continue to encourage a forum of DEC agencies in the field, as happened in Gujarat.
- Develop a wide mailing list in each disaster to ensure that facts such as decisions, procedures and rules are communicated directly to all concerned including programme partners.
- Replace four-week plans with six-week plans and ensure that these are strategic by establishing an appropriate list of headings.
- Proactively use the Red Cross Code as a test of quality.
- Consider the implications of the Gujarat experience for Sphere.
- Pay more attention to images (Red Cross Code Principle Nine) and focus on this in a future evaluation.

8. Main Learning Points.

Earthquakes

- Earthquakes do not necessarily disrupt communications and trade.
- The unpredictability of earthquakes means that there is no easy prescription for seismic safety.
- Permanent reconstruction takes longer than the time in which people can reasonably be expected to live in tents: temporary housing is an important and neglected sector.
- Like other disasters, earthquakes may tend to make the poor poorer unless corrective steps are taken.

Preparedness

- Preparedness was seen by the affected people as being about partnerships and knowledge rather than stocks and skills.
- Partnerships with local NGOs are the best means for external aid agencies to scale up.
- Where such partnerships have been developed there will be an expectation that it will continue in time of disaster; DEC members which drop local partnerships in times of crisis will find it difficult to resume them later.

Response

- Evaluations will continue to question whether agencies allow the desire for publicity and existence of stocks to outweigh humanitarian principles –and therefore agencies should take extra care in making decisions open to such an interpretation.
- Every aid agency should make a full strategic assessment within 3 months of a disaster.
- The strategy should be explicitly measured against the Red Cross Code but further indicators are required, notably in the case of unclear concepts such as accountability, transparency and dignity.
- Research should be used more widely to underpin strategy.
- The strategy must look at the wider picture and include an advocacy strategy.
- This is especially the case where the DEC response is relatively small.

Building on local capacities.

- In the Gujarat case there were no important skills that were not available locally, except knowledge of the DEC member.
- DEC members gave insufficient attention to the development of local capacity, especially of NGO partners.
- Livelihoods were emphasised in the public opinion research as the central focus for relief and rehabilitation.
- Shelter and livelihoods are closely inter-related.
- Employment in construction offers a significant opportunity to support local livelihoods.
- Migrant labour is likely to be exploited and may involve violations of human and civil rights.
- The input must be proportionate to the task. Insufficient help can undermine local capacities.

VOLUME TWO
Appendix Two

The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief

1 The Humanitarian imperative comes first

The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries. As members of the international community, we recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed. Hence the need for unimpeded access to affected populations is of fundamental importance in exercising that responsibility. The prime motivation of our response to disaster is to alleviate human suffering amongst those least able to withstand the stress caused by disaster. When we give humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such.

2 Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind.

Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone Wherever possible, we will base the provision of relief aid upon a thorough assessment of the needs of the disaster victims and the local capacities already in place to meet those needs. Within the entirety of our programmes, we will reflect considerations of proportionality. Human suffering must be alleviated whenever it is found; life is as precious in one part of a country as another. Thus, our provision of aid will reflect the degree of suffering it seeks to alleviate. In implementing this approach, we recognise the crucial role played by women in disaster-prone communities and will ensure that this role is supported, not diminished, by our aid programmes. The implementation of such a universal, impartial and independent policy, can only be effective if we and our partners have access to the necessary resources to provide for such equitable relief, and have equal access to all disaster victims.

3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint

Humanitarian aid will be given according to the need of individuals, families and communities. Notwithstanding the right of Non-Government Humanitarian Agencies (NGHAs) to espouse particular political or religious opinions, we affirm that assistance will not be dependent on the adherence of the recipients to those opinions. We will not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed.

4 We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy

NGHAs are agencies which act independently from governments. We therefore

formulate our own policies and implementation strategies and do not seek to implement the policy of any government except in so far as it coincides with our own independent policy. We will never knowingly - or through negligence - allow ourselves, or our employees, to be used to gather information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for governments or other bodies that may serve purposes other than those which are strictly humanitarian, nor will we act as instruments of foreign policy of donor governments.
We will use the assistance we receive to respond to needs and this assistance should not be driven by the need to dispose of donor commodity surpluses, nor by the political interest of any particular donor.
We value and promote the voluntary giving of labour and finances by concerned individuals to support our work and recognise the independence of action promoted by such voluntary motivation. In order to protect our independence we will seek to avoid dependence upon a single funding source.

5 We shall respect culture and custom

We will endeavour to respect the culture, structures and customs of the communities and countries we are working in.

6 We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities

All people and communities - even in disaster - possess capacities as well as vulnerabilities. Where possible, we will strengthen these capacities by employing local staff, purchasing local materials and trading with local companies. Where possible, we will work through local NGHAs as partners in planning and implementation, and co-operate with local government structures where appropriate. We will place a high priority on the proper co-ordination of our emergency responses. This is best done within the
countries concerned by those most directly involved in the relief operations, and should include representatives of the relevant UN bodies.

**7 Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of
relief aid.**

Disaster response assistance should never be imposed upon the beneficiaries. Effective relief and lasting rehabilitation can best be achieved where the intended beneficiaries are involved in the design, management and implementation of the assistance programme. We will strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programmes.

8 Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs

All relief actions affect the prospects for long-term development, either in a positive or a negative fashion. Recognising this, we will strive to implement relief programmes which actively reduce the beneficiaries' vulnerability to future disasters and help create sustainable lifestyles. We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will also endeavour to minimise the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long-term
beneficiary dependence upon external aid.

**9 We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from
whom we accept resources**

We often act as an institutional link in the partnership between those who wish to assist and those who need assistance during disasters. We therefore hold ourselves accountable to both constituencies. All our dealings with donors and beneficiaries shall reflect an attitude of openness and transparency. We recognise the need to report on our activities, both from a financial perspective and the perspective of effectiveness. We recognise the obligation to ensure appropriate monitoring of aid distributions and to
carry out regular assessments of the impact of disaster assistance. We will also seek to report, in an open fashion, upon the impact of our work, and the factors limiting or enhancing that impact. Our programmes will be based upon high standards of professionalism and expertise in order to minimise the wasting of valuable resources.

10 In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects

Respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost. In our public information we shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears. While we will cooperate with the media in order to enhance public response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence over the principle of maximising overall relief assistance. We
will avoid competing with other disaster response agencies for media coverage in situations where such coverage may be to the detriment of the service provided to the beneficiaries or to the security of our staff or the beneficiaries.

Ends

VOLUME TWO
Appendix Three

Composition of the evaluation team

The evaluation was conducted by a consortium of three organisations led by Tony Vaux of *Humanitarian Initiatives*. The three organisations are-

1. Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI)
DMI was initiated and developed during a period of severe drought in Gujarat from 1987-9 and became an autonomous organisation in 1995. One focus in relation to disaster is on listening to the voices of the affected people and generating community action from those perceptions. DMI engages in research and capacity-building in support of that aim. But DMI is also a disaster response organisation with a strong track record on rehabilitation through its Livelihood Relief Fund. DMI also has a national reputation for policy development on disaster issues and is represented in discussions at the highest levels.

Founder and Honorary Director:
Mihir Bhatt, has a degree in Urban Studies and Planning. He has published a number of studies and guides. He is from Gujarat and lives in Ahmedabad.

DMI Survey team
Girija Makwana, trained in participatory methods of mapping the interplay between women, water and work and is responsible for mainstreaming gender concerns in mitigation activities.
Tejal Dave, trained as an engineer and co-ordinated NGO responses after the 1998 Kandla cyclone. She works with DMI on promoting safer building practices through community action and capacity building.
Hasmukh Sadhu, trained in urban flood mitigation and research project management. In DMI he conducts action research on links between food and livelihoods.
J.K. Parmar, trained in livelihood support activities and now works with DMI on protecting and promoting incomes and assets of the poor during and after disasters.

DMI associate consultants:
Preeti Bhat Krishnaswamy (research consultant) has an MA in Gender and Development from IDS, Sussex. She has been extensively involved in research and evaluation including with Oxfam GB evaluating responses to the Latur earthquake.
Kirtee Shah (shelter consultant) is an architect with an extensive private practice. He is founder and director of the Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG)which has been heavily involved in shelter reconstruction projects for thirty years, including responses to the Latur 1993 and Gujarat 2001 earthquakes.
Nimish Shah (financial management consultant) is a chartered accountant and senior partner in a prominent Ahmedabad firm of chartered accountants. He has worked specifically with NGOs.

2. Humanitarian Initiatives (HI)

HI is a new organisation founded in mid-2000 and registered as a company in the UK in July 2001. The aim of *HI* is to inform and improve aid interventions by analysis and evaluation. Apart from this evaluation it has focused mainly on conflict assessment. *HI* represents three key values-

- Action based on analysis
- Accountability to the person in need
- Accountability to the donor through transparency

Director: Tony Vaux (Team Leader) was Field Director for Oxfam in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, for 4 years and also lived in Delhi and Calcutta. He was Oxfam's global Emergencies Coordinator for ten years and is author of *'The Selfish Altruist'* –a personal view of the limits to philanthropy.

Other key representatives

Hugh Goyder (Deputy Team Leader) has also represented Oxfam in India. He conducted the DEC's Orissa evaluation in 1999 and has worked extensively as an evaluation specialist for Oxfam, ActionAid and many other agencies. He is a Director of *HI.*

Sarah Routley (Research Consultant) studied environmental science and also has a degree in Development Practice and has specialised in community research during disasters. She has worked extensively with international NGOs.

3. Mango

Mango was founded in 1999 to provide financial management support to relief and development operations. It has a register of accountants, a website with free tools, offers training and has set up a financial network in the UK.

Director: Alex Jacobs (Financial Management Consultant) has a degree in anthropology and is a qualified chartered accountant. He has worked with Oxfam GB and other organisations in a number of disaster situations around the world. He is the founder of Mango.

DMI/HI/Mango
DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat/6

VOLUME TWO
Appendix Four

Evaluation Schedule and Persons consulted

1. Evaluation Team

Preeti Bhat (PB)
Mihir Bhatt (MB)
Hugh Goyder (HG)
Alex Jacobs (AJ)
Sarah Routley (SR)
Kirtee Shah (KS)
Nimish Shah (NS)
Tony Vaux (TV)

2. Schedule

January 26th 2001: Earthquake occurs.

*{**March***
Monitoring Mission (MB, TV) –report on DEC website}

June
Evaluation contract signed.
Briefings with DEC Secretariat.

July
Research project team recruited (MB)
DEC members in UK/Ireland consulted (HG)
Preparation of evaluation work-plan (TV)
General reading and data collection

August
Preparation of finance methodology (AJ)
Consultation with DEC members in UK/Ireland (AJ)
Visit to India to negotiate research methodology with stakeholders (TV, SR)
Training of research team (SR, PB, MB)
Research project starts mid-August
Identify and brief India-based financial management consultant (TV,AJ)
Negotiations with shelter consultant (TV)
Field Visit to Kutch (MB, TV) -to consult DEC members about research
-some field visits and discussions with agencies

September

Financial analysis (NS)
Support to research (SR,PB)
Research project ends 28th Sept.
Debrief research team in Ahmedabad (SR,PB).

October

Visit to Kutch for shelter sector (KS)
Visit to Delhi (TV): Meetings with Government of India**,** UNDP, UNICEF, Red Cross Federation, SCF, HelpAge, Christian Aid, Oxfam)
First draft of research report (SR)
Visit in Gujarat –shelter (KS,TV)
Visit in Kutch -Sphere, general (HG)
Visit in Kutch -financial management (AJ)
Presentation of findings to DEC agencies in Bhuj
Meetings with civil society reps in Ahmedabad and Government of Gujarat officials including Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority in Gandhinagar (MB,TV).

November

Report writing –first draft (KS,AJ,HG,TV).
Presentation of draft reports to DEC members and secretariat in London
Discussions with DEC members as requested (BRCS, SCF, CARE, Oxfam, ActionAid)

December

Final draft of reports
Preparation for publication of research in India
Evaluation completed

3. Persons Consulted (non-DEC)

Delhi
Alok Mukhopadhyay, Executive Director, Voluntary Health Association of India
Maria Calivis, Representative, UNICEF
Dennis Lazarus, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP
K. Mahesh, Officer on Special Duty to Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Government of India
Dr Vinod K. Sharma, Professor (Disaster management), Indian Institute of Public Administration
Michael Shiromony, IAS, Director (Disasters), Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India
Sri Naved Masoud, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Ahmedabad
Binoy Acharya, Director, Unnati
Amar Gargesh, consultant, IFRC
Barry Underwood, consultant
Rajesh Kapoor, Executive Director, Cohesion
Prasad Chacko, Director, Behavioural Science Centre
James Dabhi, Behavioural Science Centre
M.D. Mistry, MP, Disha
Achyut Yagnik, Secretary, SETU

Gandhinagar
R.J. Makadia, GAS, Director (Disaster Management), Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
P.K. Mishra, IAS, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister
V. Thiruppu, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
S.K. Nanda, IAS, Secretary, Health, Government of Gujarat

Kutch/Saurashtra
Mrs H. Bedi, Field Representative, Community Aid Abroad
Sushma Iyengar, Co-Director, Abhiyan
Bhanu Mistry, Manager at Bhachau, Unnati
Rakesh Mohan, Project Manager, Aparajita
Prem, EFICOR
Dr Unnikrishnan P.V., Emergencies Co-ordinator, Oxfam India Society
Praveen Pardeshi, IAS, Programme Manager –Gujarat, UNDP
Professor Kher, Gram Vikas Trust, Dwarka

VOLUME TWO
Appendix Five

TERMS OF REFERENCE

THE INDEPENDENT INDIA EARTHQUAKE EVALUATION:

1. Background

The major earthquake of the 26th January, according to official estimates caused the death of 19,988 people, of whom 18,999 died in Kutch District, and injured 1.6 million people. Over 300,000 houses were completely destroyed and nearly 900,000 damaged. The estimated loss is including extensive damage to industrial establishments is £3.5 billion[52]. It severely affected nearly 16 million people[53].

Without doubt the international response to the earthquake on 26th January was rapid and massive. According to UNDAC[54], by 10th February 'relief had arrived from 38 countries and the presence of 245 agencies had been registered, including at least 99 international NGOs, 55 national NGOs, 20 donor government teams, 10 UN and intergovernmental organisations and Red Cross Representatives from 10 countries.'

The DEC launched an Appeal on the 1st February and established within the first week that the Fund would exceed £15 million and Members were asked to plan a response on that basis. In fact the Appeal has raised over £21 million which again demonstrates the remarkable generosity of the British Public. DFID also make £10 million available for the relief effort with some of these funds going to DEC members.

The initial response of the member agencies concentrated on relief items such as shelter, blankets, household and hygiene kits and the provision of mobile and centre based health care. This was followed up with rehabilitation, and reconstruction and support for livelihoods.

2. The Evaluation:

An independent evaluation is an integral part of the DEC's approach. This evaluation enables the DEC Secretariat and its Members fulfil three responsibilities:

Public accountability
Demonstrate compliance with the Code of Conduct
Learn lessons and improve performance in the future

The basic framework and criteria for the Evaluation team to make judgements and recommendations are the Red Cross Code of Conduct, to which the members are signatories, appropriate Sphere Standards and the Six DEC evaluation criteria of:

[52] See www.gujarat-earthquake.gov.in figures as at 9th March 2001.
[53] The figure for 'affected' is not very helpful. Seriously affected would probably be less than 2 million. See www.gujaratindia.com for detailed figures.
[54] UNDAC '*Team Bhuj Final Report'* at www.reliefweb.int

- **Timeliness and Appropriateness of response** – this would also cover issues of capacity and preparedness to enable a rapid and sensitive response
- **Cost effectiveness** – the efficiency of the response
- **Impact** - reviewing the reduction in mortality, morbidity and suffering achieved by the Member's actions
- **Coverage** – scale and ability to reach those most in need, given political, religious and social context of the emergency
- **Connectedness** – links into local capacity, plans and aspirations and the collaboration and co-ordination of the Members efforts
- **Coherence** - the integration of relief activities to policy and practice changes needed to address root causes

The accountability is not only to the donors, but also to the beneficiaries or claimants of the relief effort. The evaluation methodology should involve the different stakeholder and beneficiaries of the DEC funded programmes

The Monitoring Report
An initial monitoring visit was carried out in March which forms part of the basis for this evaluation and is available on the DEC Website at www.dec.org.uk. Issues and areas of focus identified in the monitoring report will need to be developed in the main evaluation.

Instead of trying to cover the whole range of activities undertaken by the DEC Members the evaluation team will use three specific windows through which to look at the response.

- **Shelter provision – temporary and permanent**
- **Targeting of response to the most needy and the responsiveness to specific "high risk" groups and individuals.**
- **Financial management and systems**

a. Shelter:

Given the crucial importance of damage to homes and community buildings in the Indian Earthquake the evaluation will focus on this theme. The report should cover the delivery of immediate relief, the choice of types of temporary shelter- tents, plastic sheeting and local materials, the issue of local purchase against import, and relevant sphere standards. The solutions for hospitals, schools and clinics should also be reviewed.

Secondly the timing and shift to more permanent shelter solutions and the policy and practical choices of the rebuilding and rehabilitation programmes. The lessons from other earthquakes especially Latur in India will be very relevant in judging the choices made and the recommendations for future responses to large earthquakes.

b. Targeting:

Commentaries on the earthquake response raised several issues about the ability of the relief agencies both governmental, commercial and voluntary to reach those most affected, both physically and mentally, and whose lives and livelihoods had been most harmed, especially in the complex social, cultural and political context of the region.

Targeting was also raised as an issue in the monitoring report whether special needs of interest groups such as the elderly or the physically handicapped had been given appropriate attention. The monitoring mission report also drew attention to the issue of

evaluating the reduction in suffering as well as the effect on mortality and morbidity. A methodology for evaluating the reduction in suffering will need to be developed by the evaluation team.

Effective targeting is dependent of good information management and co-ordination, and the evaluation team will need to draw conclusions on how this was handled and might be better handled in the future.

c. Financial Management:

The complexity of the funding and financial management of the DEC members has meant this issue has been weak in previous DEC evaluations. This component can and should serve as the primary way accountability to the donors is achieved. The evaluation, while not being an audit, which is the responsibility of each member, should look at the total picture of DEC spend. This would include reviewing the robustness of the systems for allocating and tracking spend from the Appeal phase through to the beneficiaries via the different members including their systems of financial monitoring and reporting. Through this exercise the Members should be able to demonstrate that the money was spent on the activities set out in the plans. The evaluation should review the volume of funds allocated under the major DEC programme budget heads.

The evaluation should make recommendations to the DEC Secretariat and Members about the financial framework for raising, budgeting, allocating and monitoring the appeal funds.

3. Method

Participating DEC agencies are required to submit the following material (in both hard copy and electronic format) to the Secretariat to assist the evaluation team's work:

- a summary chronology and key documents on the agency's response to the emergency and their use of DEC funds including financial procedures
- names, contact details and roles during the response of key agency and partner personnel in the head office and in the relevant field offices
- List of indicators used by the agencies to monitor and evaluate their DEC funded activities and any monitoring or evaluation reports.

The Secretariat will prepare a package of materials on each participating agency to be given to the evaluation team, as well as appeal related documentation on financial and other actions and the Monitoring Report undertaken in March 2001. **It will be important that the Consultants review the exisiting DEC evaluations and the Vine Mangement Summary Report so that this evaluation builds on the existing body of knowledge available to the DEC Members**

The evaluation team will begin with a review of available documentation. The team will be responsible for ensuring appropriate data-collection is undertaken in the field following their appointment, so that key information that may no longer be available in the later stage of the DEC funded response, is not lost to the evaluation process. Since certain operations will already have closed down by the time the evaluation proper is underway, it might be appropriate to undertake preliminary fieldwork during the expenditure period.

The main evaluation mission which will be timed to coincide with the last month of

the period of action covered by the nine month action plans submitted by the Members (October). This visit schedule will be confirmed after the review of written material and the visits to the UK offices of the Members. The evaluation team's schedule, accommodation and transport arrangements will be finalised and communicated to the Secretariat and all agencies at least one week prior to any visit.

During their time with each agency the team will interview key personnel remaining in-country (contacting others prior to the field visits or on their return) and undertake visits to selected project sites/areas. The field visit must include at least one DEC funded project for each participating agency. The evaluators will have to make extensive use of agency reports and their own preliminary data collection, where later site visits would prove pointless. It should be noted that in the case of agencies that are part of larger organisations UK assistance might not be distinguishable from that of global counterparts, nevertheless, every effort should be made to distinguish DEC funding.

As well as interviewing the agencies' project officers, key officials in co-ordinating agencies (e.g. UNICEF, OCHA, central and state governments), and partner agencies, a sample of beneficiaries will be selected and interviewed by the evaluators. These interviews will be conducted without agency personnel being present, using interpreters (where necessary) hired directly by the evaluation team. The beneficiaries will be questioned on their views of the assistance provided, the way they were selected and their overall views of the agency. Interviews with individuals may be complemented by discussions with groups of beneficiaries. So as to assess the agency's targeting and beneficiary selection methods the evaluation team will also interview a selection of potential beneficiaries who did not receive assistance.

It is expected that the evaluation team will use gender-aware and participatory approaches to seek the views of beneficiaries and, where appropriate, non-beneficiaries. Inclusive techniques will be expected of the evaluators, to seek active participation in the evaluation by members of local emergency committees, staff of implementing partner agencies and member agencies, and representatives of local and central governments.

Before leaving the country, members of the team will indicate their broad findings to Country Representative and senior staff of each agency and note their comments.

A meeting should then be held in London to disseminate a draft report of the evaluation. The report should be circulated one week prior to the workshop to allow for preliminary review by agencies and their partners, and followed by a two-week formal agency comment period.

4. The Report

The evaluation report should consist of:

- executive summary and recommendations (not more than six pages)
- main text, to include index, emergency context, evaluation methodology, appeal management, commentary and analysis addressing evaluation purpose and outputs to include a section dedicated to the issue taking forward particular lessons learned, conclusions (not more than thirty pages)
- appendices, to include evaluation terms of reference, maps, sample framework,

summary of agency activities, sub-team report(s), end notes (where appropriate) and bibliography. **(All material collected in the undertaking of the evaluation process should be lodged with the Secretariat prior to termination of the contract)**

5. Evaluation team and timeframe

It is anticipated there will be a core team of three people. The Team Leader should have a proven background in emergency evaluations. The appropriate balance and size of team is up to the tendering organisations, but a financial expert and emergency/earthquake housing expertise will be required. There must be at least one Gujurati speaker.
All team members should be gender aware, and a reasonable gender balance is desirable. Consultants or independent evaluation teams short-listed in the tendering process should seek DEC approval for any proposed changes to the composition of the team originally submitted.

The evaluation timeframe should allow for the circulation of a first draft by 4 January 2002, followed by presentation of the draft by the evaluation consultant(s) to member agencies a week later. A formal comment period, of at least two weeks, for participating agencies and their partners will then follow. The completion date for the Final Evaluation Report will be 15th February 2002, the consultants having addressed agencies' comments as appropriate.

6. Tenders and Evaluation Management

Tenders should be submitted to the DEC Secretariat by the **closing date of 25th May 2001**. A maximum 5 page summary should be submitted with appendices of team member CVs (each CV a maximum of 3 pages) and an indication of availability. The DEC may wish to see substantive pieces work or to take up references of short-listed consultants.

The final decision on tenders will be taken by the DEC Chief Executive, following short-listing and interviews. Key factors will include:

Provisional framework, methodology, team balance and professionalism, local experiences, timeframe and budget (realism not just competitiveness)

an appreciation of key constraints and comments on the above terms of reference

Tenders will be accepted from "freelance" teams as well as from company, PVO or academic teams. Tenders are particularly welcome from joint UK/Regional teams.

The evaluation Team Leader must, from the commencement of the evaluation, submit a monthly report on actual against anticipated progress In addition, the Team Leader should alert the Secretariat immediately if serious problems or delays are encountered. Approval for any significant changes to the evaluation timetable will be referred to the Chief Executive.

It is anticipated the selection process will be complete by early **June 2001.**

DMI/HI/Mango
DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat/8

VOLUME TWO
Appendix Six

Select Bibliography

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Independent Evaluation of Expenditure of DEC India Earthquake Appeal Funds

January 2001 – October 2001

VOLUME THREE

Sector Reports

Humanitarian Initiatives, UK
Disaster Mitigation Institute, India
Mango, UK
December 2001

DMI/HI/Mango
DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat

VOLUME THREE
Sector Reports

Report One
Public Opinion Research by *Disaster Mitigation Institute*
Part 1: Methodology
Part 2: Findings

Sarah Routley
Humanitarian Initiatives
December 2001

Part One

Methodology

1. Aims of the Research

The aim of the community level research was to document the communiies (beneficiaries and others) views of the January 2001 Gujarat earthquake response (by DEC Agencies and others). The evaluation sought to focus on agency adherence to the 10 points of the Red Cross Code of Conduct in addition to the targeting of interventions, with the shelter sector selected by the DEC as a specific area of interest.

1.1 Methodology Summary

The community research was carried out by the Disasters Mitigation Institute (DMI) India, under the leadership of Mihir Bhatt, Honorary Director, and supported by an independent consultant from India, Preeti Bhat and the methodology consultant Sarah Routley. A series of key research topics were developed from the evaluation criteria in a workshop with the participation of members of the research team. To facilitate discussions with the community groups around each of the key topics, 3 participatory exercises were developed: a matching game, ranking and time-line exercise. Key informant and general interviews would allow the research teams to cross-check information, document personal views on the earthquake response and supplement the information from the exercises. In order to assist the team in recording the information a set of record-sheets, tables and matrix sheets were designed, to create a 'community pack' for the systematic recording of views from each community visited. Regular debrief sessions were built into the research plan to allow the team time to complete the community pack, reflect on and discuss the findings.

A total of 16 researchers were involved in the methodology workshop. It was proposed that the research would be carried out in approximately 60 communities (yet to be finalised), over a period of 6 weeks, by 4 teams of 4 researchers from DMI.

1.2 Evaluation Criteria and Research Topics

During the first few days of the methodology workshop the various evaluation topics and the meaning of the 10 Principles of the Code of Conduct were explored and disaggregated by the research team. This allowed a list of key research topics that covered the most important principles and targeting issues to be developed. The research topics were then divided into factual information and opinion/judgements, questions about the interventions and the process.

	The interventions/aid		**The process: How was it given**	
	Topic	**Method**	**Topic**	**Method**
Fact	Which groups got aid? What aid did they get? Which criteria were used in the allocation of the aid? Who missed out? Timeliness, quality, appropriateness? Who gave aid?	Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game / involvement line Involvement line	Communities involvement in phases of interventions Communities treated according to custom, culture, dignity Agencies acted accountably, transparently and with understanding Interventions changes in local capacity and reduction of future vulnerability	Involvement line Allocation game, Interviews Involvement line, interviews Capacity ranking
Opinion	Who should have got aid? Why? What should have been given? Why? When should it have been given? Why didn't this always happen	Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game Interviews	The indirect and direct benefits of the interventions The desirability of the level of involvement How communities wanted to be treated by agencies How communities wanted agencies to act, (what does accountably, with understanding and transparency mean)	Interviews Involvement line Involvement line, interviews Interviews, involvement line

The key questions and topics were arranged into 3 sets of topics, each corresponding to an exercise. Note the terms aid, relief and interventions are used interchangeably

2. The Allocation of Relief

2.1. Aim

To find out what the community felt about the targeting, timing, quality, and quantity of the various interventions and aid in their community.

2.2 Key Topics

Which groups received what aid in the community?
Who was missed out of relief interventions?
Did the community feel there was any discrimination? On what basis did this occur?
Did the community feel the relief interventions occurred at the best time, in the correct amount and or sufficient quality?
What assistance does the community feel they needed?
Who needed it? On what criteria should it have been given?
If not why wasn't it given according to the needs of the community?
How did they feel they were treated by the organisation? Did they feel they were treated with understanding, respect, according to custom, culture? How did the response and agencies make them feel (in the community's own words)?

Note: Particular attention is to be paid to any shelter interventions, including: tents, temporary and permanent housing examples

2.3 Exercise: The Allocation Game

- The group was asked to draw, or write onto cards, the interventions/aid that the community as a whole received following the earthquake. The cards were laid in a line on the ground.
- The group was then asked to draw or write who received each intervention/aid onto cards. The corresponding cards were laid below the first row of cards.
- Pre-prepared 'Timing Cards' (with 'too late', 'too early', 'on time' written on them), 'Quantity Cards' (with 'too little', 'too much', 'ok' on them) and 'Quality Cards '(with 'too low', 'too high', 'ok' on them) were then placed below each line in turn by members of the group.
- Finally, all the cards but the first row were removed and the groups who needed and should have got each intervention/item. The group then discussed who was missed out of the response and why, and what other interventions they needed. Any shelter interventions were elaborated upon during the exercise.

3. Community Involvement

3.1 Aim

To find out what level of community participation there was in the various responses, how the community felt about their level of participation and how they would ideally have liked to have been involved.

3.2 Key Topics

Which organisations undertook interventions in/for the community after the earthquake?
When did they begin working and what did they do?
How were community members involved in the visits or interventions (a list of options was developed, for levels and stages of involvement)?
How did community members feel about their level of involvement ('ok', wanted 'more' or 'less')?

How did they feel they were treated by the organisation? Did they feel they were treated with understanding, respect, according to custom, culture?
How would community members have wanted to be involved?
What do people feel about the response as a whole (i.e. too much assessment)?
Detailed questions about community involvement in shelter interventions, to be developed as appropriate

3.3 Exercise: Involvement Timeline

- A horizontal axis was drawn over 3 flip chart pages representing a time-period from the earthquake until the present time. On the vertical axis the possible levels of involvement were listed.
- The group was asked to draw all the interventions (assessments, visits, distributions, programmes, evaluations etc.) that had occurred since the earthquake on the timeline. The groups were questioned to ensure all phases of interventions (assessments, meetings, and all visits) were included.
- The group was questioned about the level of the community's involvement in each of the interventions. A line from each intervention to the appropriate level of involvement was drawn.
- Finally, the group was asked how it would have liked to have been involved. This was marked on the line with a cross.

The exercise allowed for the detail of particular interventions to be focused on, such as the activities of the DEC members, the Government response, and the shelter response. It allowed intervention phases to be compared, i.e. the level of involvement in assessment, response, evaluations, the level of involvement immediately after the earthquake and then at the start of the rehabilitation phase, a comparison of different agency responses.

4. Changes in Community Capacity

4.1 Aim

To find out how the capacity of the community changed as a result of the various earthquake interventions, and what impact external organisations had on this change. To find out whether the community considers that such changes in its capacity would help reduce future vulnerability to disasters.

4.2 Key Topics

How was community capacity (organisation, structures, contacts, skills, resources, knowledge, key people etc) affected by the response, (i.e. was it strengthened, reduced)?
Why/how did the change occur? What was the role of agencies direct and indirect in this?
What capacity was particularly important during the earthquake?
What existing or new capacity will be useful in future disasters?

4.3 Exercise: Capacity Ranking Table

- A table with 5 columns was drawn on a large flip chart page
- The group was asked to list all local capacities that were important at the time of the earthquake in the first column of the table. Capacity was explained as organisations, structures, external contacts, networks, skills, resources, knowledge, key people etc.
- The next 3 columns, were marked as 'strength before' the earthquake, 'strength during' the earthquake and 'strength now'. The group was asked to rank with stones the strength of each capacity, before, during, and after the earthquake.
- Discussions were led by the researchers to establish why and how the capacity of the community changed. The reason for the change in capacity was noted in the final 'why' column of the table.
- The group discussed whether these changes in capacity would affect the community's vulnerability to future disaster. The role of the DEC agencies in changing capacity or future vulnerability in particular was noted.

5. Research Techniques and Issues

5.1 Debriefing and Recording

A key to the success of the research and depth of information gathered was not just the method of research itself, but the recording and write up of the findings. In order to allow adequate time to listen to the views of the community, for team debriefs and recording of findings a team of 4 researchers was allocated to each community for a period of 3 days.

Within each team, one team member was responsible for leading each exercise. All team members had a checklist of key topics to be covered in each exercise and the interviews. The 3 other members acted act as observer, listener, recorder, and facilitator. Their role was to document the various discussions, observe the dynamics of the groups, and encourage discussion amongst the group and secondary discussions amongst some of the quieter group members. It was suggested that during the first exercise in each community one of the observers would make the necessary introductions of the team, gather background information on the community, and identify key informants within the community. This allowed the exercise to begin quickly upon the teams arrival. Members of Abhiyan assisted the researchers by introducing them to key members of the communities.

Regular debrief sessions were built into the research to allow regular discussion between team members. A series of record sheets, tables and matrices were designed to ensure that the full depth and richness of community views were recorded objectively, with limited interpretation or paraphrasing, for analysis by the evaluation team. The key topics, exercise guidelines, record sheets, and interview notes together comprised a community pack for each community.

Each day began with an exercise, lasting 3-4 hours, after which the team had a debrief session, which lasted up to 1 hour. During the exercise debrief the team recorded in the community pack: any missing voices, people to cross check with, missing topics (from key topics), team reflections and observations. The team then planned the interviews according to the information and voices missing from the exercise and the need to cross check information. The observers then read through their notes from the exercise and highlighted any key issues and quotes for

inclusion on the 'key issues matrix' and 'quotes tables' at the end of the day. Following this, the team carried out interviews for 2-3 hours. After the interview sessions the team had a final debrief, in which team members highlighted key quotes and issues discussed from their notes, all key issues and quotes from both their interview and exercise notes, were then added to the relevant tables in the community pack. Where possible the team indicated on the 'key issues matrix' who and how often issues were mentioned. The total number of people involved in the exercise and interviews were noted. The debrief session allowed discussion between the team members on the issues raised and methods used, and ensured that team reflections, and the depth of detail discussed by the community, was recorded.

5.2 Sequencing of Methods

The correct sequencing of the exercises was crucial to ensure an increase in the level of detail about the response. The first exercise, the allocation game allowed discussion on what assistance the community received, the timing, quantity and quality of the interventions. The involvement line gave details of how the community was involved in the intervention and how they would have liked to be involved and finally the changes in community capacity ranking exercise focused on the impact (direct and indirect) of the response. The exercises were designed to facilitate general discussion around the key topics in an informal and open atmosphere.

The individual interviews and key informant interviews that followed the exercises allowed for progression to a greater depth of information and expression of personal views in private once a degree of trust had been established. The importance of informal chats to women, children, and groups that were difficult to access was highlighted during the research and ways to document such information discussed.

5.3 Bias, Missing Voices, Triangulation and Gatekeepers

The researchers identified a number of potential 'missing voices' including low status communities and members of lower castes/status, poorly educated, widows, women, the disabled and sick, those living on the outskirts of communities, working in near by towns during the day. In order to try to capture the views of these groups, the researchers tried to identify those missing from each exercise, comparing key informant information on who was living in the communities with observations on who attended exercises and records of who had been interviewed. The team planned the timing and location of further exercises and follow-up interviews accordingly to try to obtain the views of missing voices. The timing of the researcher visits alternated between morning and afternoon visits to afternoon and evening visits, in the hope of capturing the voices of a greater section of the community. It was hoped that the researchers might occasionally stay over night in communities, to allow late evening discussions.

Great thought was put into the appropriate sites for conducting the exercises in order to encourage the attendance of as diverse a cross section of the community as possible. Areas such as temples, markets, communal outside spaces, wells were suggested as possible sites. The team discussed the advantages and disadvantages of choosing open outside areas where passers-by could feel free to join in and where people could drift in and out as their time allowed. This would also allow community members to see what the research involved. Closed areas were also used where group sizes and levels of participation could be more easily controlled. The need in some situations to go out looking for certain groups and carry out an exercise at a convenient

location to them, i.e. close to a field where women were working, or next to an area of building activities was highlighted.

The role of children in terms of providing information on communities activities and views and their openness to discussions was considered by the group, who intended to run some children's exercises concurrently with the main exercises.

The importance of cross-checking, triangulation, identification of bias and reduction of the impact of bias was discussed during the workshop, as was the role of gatekeepers and key informants. The research team suggested that priests, the barber, postman/milkman, the midwife, shopkeepers, children and women's group/dairy group leaders might act as gatekeepers and key informants in communities. Researchers felt that the uniform composition of the research team in terms of age (mostly early 30's, late 20's), status/caste, level of education, experience, language (Gujarati speakers, not vernacular), lack of local knowledge might lead to some bias in the findings. It was suggested that Abhiyan members, who knew the area, and were of a more diverse age, status etc, could compliment the DMI team.

The involvement of Abhiyan in the research was discussed at length. The possible biases created by Abhiyan's role as both implementing agency and co-ordinator during the response was felt to be outweighed by their knowledge of the communities, key informants, greater diversity of staff (compared to the DMI team). Although it was important to recognise the possibility of the introduction of additional bias, and the need of sensitising all team members to the approaches to be used and aim of the research in order to reduce bias.

5.4 Expectations and Responsibilities

The team raised concerns over whether or not communities would understand the nature of the research and if they would understand the value of giving their time to the exercises. It was decided that a clear and transparent introduction by the team was essential to their understanding of the aims, methods and purpose of the research. It was anticipated that this would assist in dispelling false hopes and expectations of the community.

A discussion of the responsibilities of each researcher not to push people to discuss issues they found painful or preferred not to discuss raised concerns about the political nature of certain issues and the need to consider who, if anyone, was gaining political capital from conversations and the research process.

The role of the researchers as recorders of community member's views on the response was emphasised throughout the workshop. The importance of researchers being able to objectively discuss issues, and not to interpret or express their own views and knowledge, was highlighted. This would need further monitoring throughout the initial stages of the research during debrief and monitoring sessions.

5.5 Quantitative and Qualitative Information

The nature of most of the findings will be qualitative, yet the methodology and recording process was designed to allow some quantitative analysis of the information. For example, the key issues matrix, which listed the key discussion issues, indicated the approximate number of times issues were raised and by whom. By recording how many people were involved in the exercises and interviews it was possible to say that out of discussions with x number of community members a certain issues arose y number of times. This would allow issues to be ranked by frequency of discussion. The process would also allow the team to follow-up why certain groups were raising particular issues.

5.6 Site Selection

To allow the views of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to be heard, it was proposed that the research would be carried out in areas inside and outside of DEC agency operation, and where other agencies only were present, (including the Government) and areas where no formal response was made. The criteria for site selection included; the level of impact of earthquake and numbers affected, the spread of DEC agencies and partners, Kutch and non-Kutch areas, the spread of other organisations/government, access and distance from road and towns, urban and rural mix. Each DEC agencies was asked to select and prioritise 5 communities they would like included in the evaluation. From this list, and according to the selection criteria, it was proposed that the research team would select 50 communities.

6. Review of Research Methodology

The researchers and writer analysed the results over a 10-day period. All community packs were analysed, the research team was interviewed on their findings according to community and topics, and key topics were discussed in plenary to ensure the depth of information was analysis. The writer and research team found the community packs and formats contained a wealth of information on communities' views, the need for translation for the report writing limited the information that could be included.

The research team stated the approach had the following advantages and disadvantages

Advantages of approach	**Disadvantages of approach**
children could participate and be used to cross check information	visualization was difficult for some illiterate people
information could be collected on a broad range of topics	verbal and visual techniques were not always appreciated by educated people
compared to questionnaires a greater depth of information could be gained	much responsibility placed on team leaders to manage sessions
combination of exercises and interviews allowed balance of detail and personal views	quality of data dependant on broad range of skills within team
the records allowed missing voices from exercises to be followed up and captured	bringing different groups together to discuss what they received risked conflict
communities could share their own experiences freely in interviews, having established trust during group exercises	recording and analysis took alot of time
communities had a wealth of information to share on their own experiences and views	required emotional sensitivity towards victims of earthquake
it inspired the team to practice tools and listen to communities, once they realised all they had to share and their willingness to participate	quotes obtained in vernacular - difficult to translate
2-3 days in communities allowed a relationship to be developed with communities, trust to be established	some limitations of group work if community leaders present
team members learned from each other and worked closely together, high level of inter dependence necessary	pressure at end of day to complete records and participate in team debriefing
allowed leaders and gatekeepers to be taken aside for interviewing and sessions with communities to be carried out simultaneously	difficulties in comparing situations and drawing conclusions on trends
allowed views of whole village/all groups in village to be heard	people were asked to state if relief was of sufficient, insufficient quality etc without benchmarks being given
games entertained people and were unique so attracted interest and involvement	the exercises didn't always allow detail to be collected
higher degree of trust when community member can see what is being written	analysis took much time
daily debrief sessions allow reflection on information, recording of what was heard on the spot, without losing original meanings	

The research team felt the main advantages of the combination of participatory exercises, focus group discussions and individual interviews used was that information about a broad range of topics could be found in a relatively short period of time, that information could be cross-checked and the views of those missing from exercises could be followed up in interviews. One disadvantage was the time required during the research to record findings and debrief team members and the time required at the end for the analysis of the findings. It was considered

helpful to use the Code of Conduct in order to assess how agencies measured up against an agreed standard. Initially the team were concerned that community members may not see the relevance of sharing their views. Some team members saw the research as experimental and were unsure what the outcome would be, One stated *'the research is like a bike helmet, you do not know in advance how well it will work'.*

In reality, community members stated that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss their experiences of the response with the team, particularly if it would assist victims of future disasters. Some stated they liked the way they were treated by the team and tat they took time to listen to their views- *'the team didn't just ask for chairs, but sat with us on the floor like our relatives would do'.*

Some members of the community stated that no one else had asked what they wanted or needed, or how they felt about the response. In general the team felt the community liked the approach taken by them, some stated that they had particularly enjoyed participating in the exercise games- *'some people had never held a pen, and to be given one made them feel* good' stated one village member.

6.1 Constraints and Limitations

The team found the groups most difficult to access, those unable or unwilling to participate in the research to be: the elderly, sick, nomadic, Muslim women, lower castes (Dalit). It was more difficult to access people living on the outskirts of communities, the nomadic, politically involved/active, mentally distresses and those with disabilities. It was found to be harder to gain information from women in the presence of men, and members of lower castes in the presence of higher caste members. Those who had got the relief they desired were less willing to participate in some of the exercises, they stated they had no strong feelings or complaints. Exercises were carried out in sites close to women and particular communities to encourage their participation. The team found that the lack of female researchers (2) limited access to certain groups of women, (particularly Muslims). Although overall, 42% of community members consulted were women it is thought that the level of information obtain from women was lower and possibility less accurate that if a higher number of women researchers had been involved in the research. The composition of the team, -largely well educated, professional (including a social worker, a lawyer) young men, who were mostly unfamiliar with the vernacular was thought to have created some bias, although this was mitigated to some extent by their previous research experience.

The team found that those most willing and able to contribute their views were those who felt they had missed out of the response, or got little, women when they were alone, those with experience of outsider and practised at speaking to agency staff, (such as Panchayat members), and members of certain occupation groups- shop keepers, teachers, doctors, and children. Those with the loudest voice will have an obvious impact on the findings, although routine cross checking of information with as wider a range of people as possible, reduced sure bias. Within each community key informants and gatekeepers were identified, such as Sarpanch, Panchayat members, representatives from occupations such as shopkeepers, teachers, hairdressers, cleaners, labourers, farmers, small business men, masons, NGO staff, Anganwadi (the children's workers), and religious leaders. These were found to be vital for cross checking information.

Many of the communities visited comprised of different neighbourhoods, of segregated social and religious groups, hence it can't be assumed that the views obtained reflect those of the community as a whole. Where feasible the researchers obtain the views of community members of each neighbourhood, although this was difficult in large villages and urban areas. The team found in some cases that community members couldn't identify the agency responsible for some responses, and were unaware of the links of local partners to DEC agencies. For the purpose of exercise researchers asked about the interventions carried out by all agencies in order to disaggregate information on DEC agencies interventions during the analysis. Specific examples relating to all agencies were obtained, due to the difficulties in cross checking the examples with the agencies concerned for the purpose of this report agency names have been removed. The term 'agencies' refers generically to international NGOs and their partners (including DEC), local, national, regional organisations, corporate organisations and government bodies. A further limitation was the size of the sample, on average 2.4 % of the community was consulted in each community, although this dropped to 0.56 % in the 7 largest communities. The timeframe for the research allowed 2-3 days in each community. Due to the lack of accommodation the team were unable to sleep over night, hence a lot of time was taken up with travel, and the team was only available in communities during the day.

It must be stressed, that the information documented is that of the views of community members only. The approach was designed to provide a picture of some of the community members' views on the response only. In some cases it has been possible to identify some general trends, although due to the same sample the numbers included represent a guide only, and should not be considered as necessarily representative of the response as a whole. In some exercises people were asked to give a score and categorise interventions as, for example late or on time, of good, bad or OK quality, no benchmarks were given for this, the perception of people only was noted. The reasons for some of the complaints about agencies may be beyond the control of the agencies, and due initially to external factors, such as lack of funding. In some cases the only real criticism of agencies is their failure to explain their constraints to communities and why it was not possible for them to perform better. The issues raised by the communities have been recorded objectively with no attempt being made to justify the findings.

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DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat

Volume Three
Sector Reports

Public Opinion Research

Disaster Mitigation Institute

Part 2: Findings

'No one has ever asked us what we thought before'

Sarah Routley
Humanitarian Initiatives
December 2001

1. Introduction

The research was carried out by the Disasters Mitigation Institute (DMI) India, under the leadership of Mihir Bhatt, Honorary Director, supported by an independent consultant from India, Preeti Bhat and a UK-based research consultant, Sarah Routley. A series of key research topics were developed from the evaluation criteria in a workshop with the participation of members of the research team. To facilitate discussions with the community groups around each of the key topics, three participatory exercises were developed: a matching game, ranking and time-line exercise. Key informant and general interviews allowed the research teams to cross-check information, document personal views on the earthquake response and supplement the information from the exercises. In order to assist the team in recording the information a set of record sheets, tables and matrix sheets were designed, to create a 'community pack' for the systematic recording of views from each community visited. Regular debrief sessions were built into the research plan to allow the team time to complete the community pack, reflect on and discuss the findings.

A total of 12 researchers were involved in the methodology workshop. It was proposed that the research would be carried out in 50 communities, over a period of 6 weeks, by 3 teams of 4 researchers.

1.1. Coverage

A total of 493 interventions and an additional 507 contacts between communities and agencies were analysed in 49[1] communities. A total of 2,372 people were consulted, including 1,005 women (42%), and the total population of the 49 communities was estimated to be 127,180. On average 2.4 % of the community was consulted in each community, although this dropped to 0.56 % in the 7 largest communities

1.2 Breakdown of the 49 communities

Rural	43
Urban	7
Kutch	38
badly affected	33
medium affected	13
minimal affected	3
DEC presence	24

1.3 Constraints and Limitations

As the views documented are those of the community members involved in the research only, it cannot be assumed that they reflect the views of the community as a whole. In larger and urban communities comprised of many neighbourhoods, the research was carried out in one neighbourhood only. Communities discussed the work of over 223 different organisations, including DEC agencies and there partners. For the sake of the report the names of all organisations have been removed from this report and the term organisation or agency has been used generically. Any quotations used have been translated from the vernacular, although every effort has been made to retain the original communities views, they are the views of individuals and do not necessarily represent of the overall community.

[1] Unfortunately the results for one village were mislaid during the analysis and only found later.

2. Provision of Relief Supplies

2.1 Targeting

Interventions stated by communities to be those needed most and least, were as follows:

Table 1: Most and least required interventions

Most needed interventions	**Least needed interventions (that were provided)**
Most needed and supplied food, or communal kitchens (when cooking utensils lost) tents, (for those with destroyed, damaged houses, or scared by tremors) domestic kits, blankets, cooking utensils, beds livelihood interventions building materials for housing **Most needed and not supplied (or in limited supply)** Water (sources, supplies and containers damaged) debris removal and assistance clearing bodies immediate first aid (particularly in rural areas) livelihood support, employment opportunities, cash for work material to make own clothes cash to replace belongings information on entitlements and government schemes	educational kits (schools were on holiday) clothes (inappropriate) temporary schools mosquito nets (not general practice to use nets) toys expensive items in agricultural kits (electric thresher), or distributions

Criteria of Allocation: Communities felt that relief was not given according to need, and in general they were unaware of any needs assessments being carried out in the early stages of the response. They stated there was little or no consultation during agency assessments and when there was, it was related to specific items that agencies possessed and were keen to distribute- *'because they had something they gave it to us'*. Another comment was- *'if there is water in the well, only then can it come to the tank'*

29 women and 22 men stated some form of discrimination affected the amounts of aid they received. The criteria for receipt of relief, according to frequency of occurrence, were stated by community members as follows.

Table 2: frequency of criteria used for allocation

Most frequent criteria	**Medium frequent**	**Least frequent**
Caste	Extent of damage / distance from epicentre	Membership of specific groups: age, widows, occupations, skill based, gender
Sectarian / religious / political affiliation	Need / lack of resources	Visibility / popularity of group
Location / remoteness / access	Population size	Presence in home area (migrants got less)

Communities reported direct and indirect beneficiary selection by agencies leading to positive and negative discrimination.

Direct Discrimination: Many organisations selected groups according to their own mandate and interests, distributing either through them to all groups or more often only to their own constituents. Positive discrimination was aimed mostly at particular religious and political groups, particular age and caste groups, women's groups and occupational groups (for training, livelihood support and kits). One Christian group for example built houses only for Christians, although they did give an option for conversion. Some higher caste groups collected money outside Gujarat and distributed it within their own communities in the Earthquake area.

In general this was seen as positive when it related to those most at need, and when it targeted vulnerable groups left out by other agencies such as widows and elderly. Generally, communities stated that the criteria should be according to economic status, which was distinct from caste categorisations, and that such selection had meant the wealthier members of society had received more from their peers than the poorer -*'my brother, nobody is bothered about the poor'* a Muslim Janaby lady said.

Indirect Discrimination: There were many examples where the processes used by agencies led to discrimination according to gender, location, caste, wealth/poverty, and visibility. Some agencies distributed through community Relief Committees where various degrees of representation were reported, with some communities stating they had not received items given to the Committee on their behalf -*'the leaders and Committee members got lots of relief - the ex-Sarpanch has built a new house outside of the village'*

Women, lower caste groups and those representing smaller numbers stated they were left out of decision making in the relief committees and hence were also omitted from relief distributions often because the process used excluded them from participating-*'when the clothes were dropped on the road by trucks there was a stampede. The women were too shy to go so we sent the children - the clothes we got were of no use to the elderly or the women'.* And again- *'those who were there snatched everything - the poor were left out - how could this happen when so many poor are here?'*

Some agencies insisted on communities queuing for items, and distributed on first come, first served basis, with the result that higher social groups invariably joined the front of the queue. Some caste groups reported that it was unacceptable for them to join the queues at all and many women had similar reports. A number of comments are recorded on this issue-
'we were told to stand in a queue to receive items. All castes had to stand together but the lower castes felt bad and couldn't stand with the high castes, so couldn't get anything'

'the high caste were always at the front of the queue and by the time we got there everything was gone'

'as women we couldn't queue in a public place, so we got nothing'

'the women were unable to queue for hours as we were looking after children'

Some leaders exerted a high level of control over distributions insisting all items had to be given to the Committees and setting specific times for the distributions. This led to indirect forms of discrimination- *'we waited everyday at 4.00, the time given by the leaders for the distribution to begin, but nothing ever came'.*

Some agencies based distributions on ration cards. There were cases where this excluded specific groups, such as those who had lost their cards in the earthquake, recently arrived migrants and those who were newly married. Muslim groups complained they lost out through this system as the ration cards were based on an average number of five family members and the majority of people in their community had more than three children.

Organisations that catered for all social groups together, in feeding centre programmes, permanent shelter schemes etc., excluded certain groups who refused to accept such conditions. Higher castes, frequently opted out of such interventions, refusing to eat with and live next to lower caste community members, and in some cases they put pressure on leaders to stop such interventions.

Another form of indirect discrimination occurred when an element of community participation was built into a programme. People were asked to collect materials such as tents or sacks of cement from organisational offices. These types of interventions discriminated against vulnerable members of the community. In one case elderly people were asked to collect tents from over 15kms away. A degree of self-selection occurred because people rejected the conditions and criteria of such programmes. This was often the case in shelter interventions. These were often rejected due to the level of financial contribution required, the design, size, location of or relocation required for the house construction. There were some reports of political manipulation of aid, with examples cited of one political Party preventing aid from reaching supporters of the rival Party.

2.2 Timing
There were some general trends between interventions and areas:

- The initial response was generally considered to have been timely. Such interventions included; Food (reported as timely in 100% of interventions), water (in 77%), blankets (in 70%), temporary shelter (tents, tarpaulin, in 51%), clothes (in 80%). Frequently these were supplied by local organisations or agencies from areas close to Gujarat, rather than by international agencies.
- However, not all interventions were seen as having arrived on time. Communities stated that livelihood interventions (in 60% of cases), government cheques (68%), permanent shelter (96%) and temporary shelter (49%) consistently arrived late. In particular seeds were reported as arriving too late to be planted in 80% of cases, and hence were of limited value. (Note that if interventions hadn't occurred and were unlikely to occur in a community they were not included in the exercise).
- Overall, 281 interventions were considered to have been delivered in a timely manner (57%), and 212 delivered late.
- There was a consistent pattern of aid-delivery that emerged over time - the initial response was often to urban areas but was quickly diverted to rural areas and to smaller communities once the full impact of the earthquake was realised.
- There was a drop in the number of interventions and visits by agencies over time with 76% of interventions occurring from Jan-April. One possible reason for this was that the later interventions required les contact with communities compared to the earlier distributions. Throughout the period Jan-Aug, 50% of contacts with communities were meetings, surveys, or assessments.

2.3 Quantity
Several noteworthy trends became apparent between interventions:

- Immediate relief items such as: food, tents, blankets, domestic kits, and clothes were received in sufficient quantities, or even in excess in the majority of communities. An excess quantity of food was received in 6% of villages, blankets in 2.6%, tents in 2.3%, domestic kits in 2% and clothes in 28%.
- High levels of inconsistency were seen in quantities of specific items: 44% of communities stated they received insufficient quantities of clothes whilst, 28% received too many. 48% of communities received sufficient or too many tents, whilst 52% received too few. 70% of communities felt they had received sufficient or too much food (with agencies pushing extra amounts on people by threatening to give it too cattle), whilst 29% of communities received insufficient amounts.
- Inconsistencies were reported within the work of agencies. Some communities received tents in high numbers - in one case over 2000 tents were distributed to a community with a population of 900 by one agency, yet the same agency refused requests by a neighbouring community. Although there may have been criteria for selection of communities, no explanation was given by the agency.
- Provision of water reduced quickly over time as organisations struggled to keep up with demand and limited (or no) provision was made for sustainable delivery systems or storage facilities. 21% of communities reported insufficient quantities of water. Although 78%

reported sufficient quantities, it was noted by many that it was provided on a first-come, first-served basis, so people on the outskirts of towns were often left out and gaps between deliveries meant that it was not uncommon for specific groups of people to go without water for 4-5 days.

- Shelter interventions in general were reported as being insufficient in over half the communities interviewed (the highest insufficient scoring of all interventions). Although the tents distributed were seen as meeting immediate needs, permanent shelter was extremely limited and the greatest need. 33 of the communities surveyed had 100% destruction of their homes, with only 3 communities reported as having a minimal level of damage. Despite this only 3 communities had housing construction started, and only 9 were considered to be adopted by an agency for house provision. A total of 119 houses were under construction for the general community in the 49 communities surveyed. Additionally, in 6 other communities less than 100 houses were under construction for specific groups (such as the elderly, widows, Muslims and lower castes). The timing of the survey was such that the majority of housing projects were just beginning at the time this report was finalised, although there were few signs that more houses would be rebuilt in the immediate future. In the majority of cases communities had rejected adoption and re-housing due to the inappropriateness of the package being offered due to either the design, size, relocation site or financial contribution expected.
- Overall, 36% of interventions that were received were considered by communities to be of insufficient quantity, 4% of communities reported the quantity as being too great and 60% said it was sufficient (Note: if something was not received it was not included by community members in this assessment).

There were some trends seen between communities

- Sufficient, or excess relief was received by 73% of Kutch communities surveyed, compared to 54% of non-Kutch communities. When urban and rural communities were compared, people in to 74% rural communities reported excess, or sufficient relief, compared to 28% of urban communities. Insufficient amounts of relief reached 46% of non-Kutch communities, 27% of Kutch communities and 71% urban compared to only 26% rural communities. This supported the trend observed by the researchers, that higher levels of relief reached Kutch communities, due to the media attention and proximity to the epi-centre. Urban and large centres of population received proportionally less relief after the initial days, due to agencies striving for maximum breadth of coverage and selecting smaller communities: higher levels of agency activity were experienced in rural areas.
- When shelter interventions were analysed, it was found that over 51% of Kutch and 47% rural communities received sufficient and excess interventions, where as 70% of non Kutch and 71% of urban communities received insufficient levels of relief, according to the views of community members. This can, perhaps be explained by the false assumption that the government would assist urban areas as a result of the greater level of awareness of conditions there and higher levels of media exposure.

Characteristics determining the quantity of relief received: During the research the team analysed the characteristics that were perceived by the communities to determine the quantity of relief they received. The strength, influence and connections of the community leader were seen as the most important factor in determining the amount of relief received-

'one strong, well-connected leader is better than 100 others'

'we received 2000 tents for 900 households because we had a prominent politician in the community'

'if our leader would shout louder and demand more we would get more, as others have done in other villages'

Table 3: Factors determining levels of relief

Factors determining receipt of high levels of relief	**Factors determining receipt of low levels of relief**
• active community leaders, with good politically, external contacts • proximity to municipal centres, towns, highways, transportation networks • previous links to NGOs, religious groups (Jains and Muslims) • visible, famous communities (such as weavers) • united communities with a representative village committee • strong local government or local institutions • high level of damage and deaths, (proximity to epi centre) • good individual contacts, relatives in cities, • high awareness of relief process • unity amongst castes and high level of inter caste co-operation	• members of lower caste / poorer groups (eg. labourers) • members of smaller groups and minorities • people displaced from their own communities • nomadic people and migrants • those living on outskirts of communities • women • those with larger families (Muslims) • those under represented on community committees • those with weak leaders

2.4 Quality

- Overall, 79% of interventions were considered to be of sufficient quality, 17% were deemed to be 'ok', and 4% of insufficient quality. It is important to note that the term 'quality' didn't refer to the appropriateness of the items - clothes were considered inappropriate in virtually all interventions, yet were considered to be of insufficient quality in 40% of interventions, and sufficient in only 3%, hence considered inappropriate and of bad quality, and often stated as being old and worn out.

- The only interventions that were considered to have been of sufficient quality in over 90% of communities were food interventions (reported as sufficient by 99% of communities), water (97%), domestic kits and household items (96%), sanitation (of which there were only 5 examples), and education kits (92%). Communities stated that there was a difference in the

quality of NGO- and government-distributed food, (the government food being generally of a lower quality). The content of domestic kits varied greatly, but the quality of items included was felt to be good. The water provided was considered to be of a good quality, yet the intervention itself not considered to be of sufficient quality one due to its temporary nature. Blankets were stated as being of sufficient quality in 76% of interventions, but in all other cases they were stated as being very old. Medical services were considered to be of sufficient quality in 82% of cases, and livelihood interventions in 79% of cases (although mainly these consisted of kit distributions).

- 80% of shelter interventions were considered to be of a sufficient quality, which related in the main to temporary accommodation such as tents, as few semi permanent or permanent housing interventions were completed. It was stated that as the distribution of tents was not a common intervention, any tent's distributed were considered to be better than tarpaulin. When questioned further there were issues raised concerning the quality of the material with many tents being damaged and destroyed in the first 8 months. In addition communities stated tent sizes to be too small, that the tents became very hot during the day, and that they couldn't be used to cook in. The quality of other temporary and semi-permanent shelter were observed by communities to be low - there were several examples of shelters having collapsed, which can be partly attributed to incorrect usage of the materials due to unfamiliarity.

- Some communities reported that materials distributed for temporary or semi-permanent shelters were being diverted to repair original houses, hence weakening the constructions they were intended for. Another reason stated for the low quality of such shelter was that incomplete sets of materials were given, such as roofing tiles but not supports. This led some communities to sell the materials as they could not afford to purchase the missing items. In some cases the instructions for shelter construction were not well understood and no technical advice was provided, so materials were used incorrectly, reducing the quality of the construction. Where permanent housing interventions existed they were stated as being of a high quality – however, it is unlikely that this was based on technical knowledge – rather that as cement and concrete were being used, people assumed the quality was good.

2.5 Appropriateness

- Without exception communities felt the clothes distributed were not appropriate, particularly for women, the elderly, Muslims and the men who wore traditional clothes. It was often reported that the clothing was used as filling for quilts- *'we got many clothes, but I haven't seen anyone wearing them'*

- Distribution of food grains were stated as appropriate in all cases, The importance of establishing the flourmills services after the earthquake suggesting milled grain may have been more appropriate although communities stated that the whole grains could be stored easier and for longer. A 3-month grain distribution by one agency was considered particularly appropriate as it relieved the pressure from people of having to seek immediate employment and provided some security. Initially, in some areas, processed and packaged food was distributed. This was sometimes discarded on the road, as communities were not familiar with it. The initial food kitchens were considered appropriate as communities stated

they were too traumatized to cook, had lost all their utensils and hence were unable to cook for themselves.

Some building interventions were considered inappropriate, and people were given booklets and videos to show them how to construct semi-permanent structures and earthquake-proof houses. The majority of people stated they didn't understand the instructions, some were illiterate, and there were limited video players available- *'Earthquake proofing is fine if you have the means - but what about us poor? What are we to do when we can't even afford roofing over our families?'* Communities complained there was little or no technical assistance provided, only a few examples of training were seen and, in general, they were aimed at skilled people, and people complained they didn't have the time, money or materials to construct dwellings as advised. *'If we spend our time building we can't work. Many of us migrate for labour as there is only farming here and farming always fails'*

- The required construction materials were either not supplied, or were supplied in insufficient quantities to enable communities to build according to the advice given. The research teams cited examples of misleading posters put out by aid agencies on how to build earthquake-proof houses. People felt confused over the intended permanency of some constructions, and in general felt they had received too little information and explanation from implementing agencies

- The appropriateness of the agricultural inputs was widely questioned by communities. Although seed distributions were seen as a very appropriate intervention, some farmers stated that the wrong seeds had been given for areas of dry farming. The contents of the agricultural kits were often seen as inappropriate, as some included items which were clearly not appropriate (such as electric threshers which couldn't be used on the majority of farms as there was no electricity) and there were also examples of unfamiliar items being provided (such as ox and hand tools to communities who were used to working with tractors). There were contradictory views over the appropriateness of fodder seed distributions, with some communities stating they would have preferred higher value crop seeds, such as millet or pulses and some cattle owners complained of the lack of assistance to cattle producers (with the exception of a cattle trough construction project)

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- The value of certain interventions was mentioned by some community members as inappropriate. They stated that certain items that had been distributed were expensive but had no real use: some seeds, tracksuits, high-tech items included in kits and inappropriate livelihood interventions (looms). People stated they would have preferred cheaper items or a lower amount of cash, and complained about the lack of consultation and explanation about the provision of such items.

- Particularly appropriate interventions which were specifically mentioned included: a cash-for-work scheme which paid people to clear debris, remove thorn trees and construct homes; a food-for-work scheme which allowed people to work on their own houses in return for food rations; the government cash compensation scheme for those who died on the day of the earthquake was seen as appropriate although some complained that it did not include those who died later from the injuries caused as a result of the earthquake.

- The process of allocations raised issues of appropriateness within communities. Many of the agricultural kits were distributed only to farmers with over 10 acres of land or those who had lost the most valuable houses (Grade 5 category) and hence excluded labourers, traders and small landholders. There was much dissatisfaction with the original grading and many felt they then lost out on other interventions.

- The government cheque compensation scheme was stated as being inappropriate by the majority of those interviewed. Rural communities stated that they were unfamiliar with the bank systems, and that opening an account cost money, and illiterate people stated they were unable to fill out the appropriate forms. Outstanding loans were deducted from the cheque amount by the banks, and once deposited the cheques took up to 15 days to clear. The size of cheque related solely to the level of damage and not the size of the house, hence those with larger houses felt that they lost out. In the majority of cases, cheques were delayed and many are still outstanding. When the cheques were finally obtained it was often cited as being as a result of individuals chasing them up or using personal connections- *'Should we spend our time chasing government cheques or earning the money ourselves?'*

- The cheque instalment system created problems, as a result of the initial instalment being insufficient to build structures of a standard that would pass the government requirements and hence enable the second instalment to be collected. Consequently, first instalments were frequently used to repair damaged homes. Community members stated they would have preferred the payment in one smaller instalment rather than three. The housing adoption scheme created confusion and inconsistencies – various organisations used different adoption criteria and communities were often unwilling to accept their proposals in the hope that a better offer would come along. Few adoptions actual led to housing construction within the research period (3 out of 9). Communities reported that once they had been "adopted" other agencies were discouraged and actively stopped from implementing programmes in the same community. In reality even when a community accepted adoption large numbers of its members opted out – particularly those with houses which had experienced the most damage, and consequently which had qualified for larger government cheques.

- There was deemed to be an inappropriate level of flexibility and consultation on the design, size and location of houses. The majority of adoption schemes were rejected by communities due to issues concerning the lack of exterior space for animals, lack of courtyard areas for women, mixed housing areas when castes were used to living in segregated communities, and the lack of relation to the size of the original house. In all but 2 examples, consultation occurred only once the designs had been finalised, and hence agencies presented designs to communities with little discussion. Communities were left in the position of having to reject or accept them having had little information. Where consultation over design did occur, community members were able to make small changes only, such as to internal shelving and cupboards, although several designs allowed for extensions to be made at a later date.

2.6 Recommendations made by the Community Members

Throughout the research communities made suggestions as to how the response could have been improved. They stated that in general they were satisfied with the assistance they had been given and appreciated the work of the agencies community groups, but suggested the following-

- Involvement in beneficiary selection: communities should be asked who the poor were, rather than the focus of attention being the community leaders or Committees;
- Prioritising of needs and interventions types - it was stated that with greater consultation many of the inappropriate interventions would have been avoided and the impact on recovery would have been greater. (It is important to note that communities who rejected many of the housing interventions as inappropriate felt that this could have been avoided if there had been greater consultation with communities – especially women);
- People wanted to receive cloth and make their own clothes;
- Allocation criteria should be according to need or 'economic status' as communities termed it;
- The process of distribution should be monitored to ensure receipt by intended target population;
- Distributions should not be carried out on a first-come first-served basis. It was considered inappropriate to only consult Relief Committees about interventions and not the wider community. Such Committees were reportedly not always considered representative of all groups, although they clearly played an important role in distribution and coordination in many situations;
- The standard ration card needs to be updated and redistributed according to updated Panchayat (council) lists. Lists should be held at block (sub-District) level in case of loss.
- Key community people should be nominated to coordinate or manage relief distributions;
- There should be greater flexibility in interventions. Some people stated that they would have preferred cheaper, more useful items, or cash, if they had been asked. Fewer adoptions would have failed if communities were consulted over designs in advance and agencies were more flexible;
- There should be greater coordination between agencies, particularly over shelter and the adoption schemes, to ensure consistent standards and to avoid confusion.

3. Participation of Community Members in the Response

Some general trends in the perception of community members over their participation were highlighted-

- When asked how they felt about their level of participation in interventions, in 27% of interventions communities felt their participation was sufficient, in 59% of interventions it was felt to be insufficient and in 14% of interventions it was stated that participation was too high.

- Involvement in shelter programmes appears to be higher than all other programmes: 74% of shelter interventions actively involved people in programming, compared to 51% all other

interventions. In only 14% of shelter interventions people's opinions were asked only and in 10% they were informed only briefly or not at all. The level of participation in shelter programmes reduced over time with 76% interventions actively involving communities from Jan-April and 69% during the period May-Aug. In part this was due to the number of meetings and assessments that occurred in the early stages and involved a degree of community participation, and because many agencies used external contractors for the actual implementation for purposes of speed. The number of shelter interventions where communities were informed only briefly or not at all dropped over time from 23% to 10%, which fits with this analysis.

There were differences in the type of participation that occurred, and what communities meant by their participation. Although it was difficult to draw out consistent conclusions, it did raise some important issues-

- There was a much higher level of consultation than participation in interventions. Three models of consultation were described: consultation with leaders only, with committee members and community representatives only, and with the general community. On 61 occasions community members raised the issue that the general community was not consulted. It was not uncommon for interventions such as distributions to occur without any form on consultation with the community and there were several examples cited, of items (such as tents, clothes, food and building materials) being dumped on roads by agencies without any communication whatsoever with the community.

- Characteristics of programmes displaying high levels of participation included interventions by groups that worked through their own constituencies only, such as religious, caste-based and women's groups, and those where the agency had previous contact with the community.

- There was a lower level of participation by specific groups, notably women, lower castes, minority groups and in villages where strong and exclusive committees dealt directly with agencies.

- Over time the level of participation in any one agency's response increased, e.g. the first interventions may have started with a meeting, the second with a survey and finally the programme, with the level of participation increasing throughout.

- When communities were consulted, they often felt that their views were not incorporated into the programme. Reasons for this were suggested and included issues of funding limitations and requests being made beyond agency mandates, but the prevailing feeling cited was that agencies had designed programmes prior to discussions with communities. Only in 3 examples did researchers find that communities felt they had influenced the design, or size of housing construction.

- Communities felt participation in interventions was on agencies' terms only, occurring when it was to their advantage, for example in order to reduce costs, or to provide community labour. -*'We were consulted so that agencies could get the information to complete their paperwork only'*. In the majority of interventions participation was not felt to be

advantageous to participants, or even considered desirable. This may reflect a previous culture of receiving and benefiting from interventions, rather than recognition of their role as active participants. Researchers noted that communities were unaware of housing construction sites or programme progress and felt that despite the early stage of construction and the houses not yet being allocated to individuals, there was a general lack of communication with communities-*'No one asked us how we wanted to participate, or if we wanted to'*

- Communities stated there was a lack of involvement in the identification and prioritisation of their needs, and decision making surrounding programming. Beyond immediate relief interventions, it was felt that most agencies ignored the need for livelihood support, although communities continuously and strenuously asserted that this was their primary need.

Community members were asked to choose one of five categories to describe their participation in interventions into - active participation in the interventions their management and administration, consultation by agencies with any suggestions being adopted, opinions asked but not incorporated into interventions, informed only, not informed about interventions. Some examples of each are included:

Table 4: Active participation in relief interventions

1. Active Participation in interventions
Payment for building work or items, hiring of labourers and engineer, collection of materials, attending meetings, provision of information, needs assessment. Participants in construction programmes were paid to build, and engineers were provided to assist and monitor construction according to a fixed design. A blanket distribution where women formed a committee, identified the most needy and distributed blankets to them Specialist interventions such as a livelihood project in which weavers were taken to other areas to select cotton, and given assistance with marketing Masons' training that led to employment and direct participation in construction programmes
2. Consultation by agencies with any suggestions being adopted
Distribution of larger tents after complaints over sizes A housing program: that after explanation of the model, took suggestions, changed plans and design to incorporate communities suggestions within a set budget. Siting of infrastructure such as cattle troughs, water tanks/pipelines, temporary schools A women's insurance scheme, that at the request of men allowed them to participate
3. Opinions asked but not incorporated into interventions
Discussions over adoption Locations and design of housing programmes, Needs for livelihood interventions
4. Informed only,
Some distributions Service delivery-water, medical, infrastructure Adoption schemes
5. Not informed about interventions
Dumping of children's toys, tents, building materials

3.1 Recommendations made by the Community Members

Communities felt there should have been a greater level of participation in all stages of the response and made the following recommendations-

- Participation should occur in all stages of programming, particularly for housing interventions;
- There should be participation in decision making and design - not merely consultation;
- Agencies should adjust their programmes according to communities recommendations;
- There should be more information available about agency programmes, particularly about their limitations in order to foster a greater level of understanding and ensure realistic expectations.

4. The Impact of the Response on Capacity and Vulnerability

In order to look at the impact of the response on local capacity, communities were asked in an exercise to rank their most important capacities (institutions, people, structures, contacts, physical assets) before, during, and after the earthquake. This facilitated an analysis of shifts that occurred in capacity as a result of the disaster. Although officially the traditional Panchayat and Sarpanch (village leader) were no longer recognised leaders, they were seen as the most important capacity in 20 communities during the earthquake and consequently acted as links for both government and NGO assistance, and represented community members.

Table 5: Analysis of local capacities before, during and after the earthquake

Most important local capacities during earthquake (on day or first few days)	**Nos of communities**	**Reason**
Community/religious/Panchayat leaders	43	To coordinate, manage and keep account of relief items
Teachers and children's worker	8	To assist with external contacts, writing and completing forms
Youth and youth groups	7	Assist with rescue and clearance of debris
Shop keepers	6	Supply of food and items-often on credit
Electricians / masons	7	
Postmen	3	To assist completing government compensation forms
Relief committee	6	Coordinated and managed relief distributions
Cooperatives-SEWA	6	
Local community organisations	5	Provided support in initial stage
Contacts with government	3	Assisted in obtaining assistance
Vehicles	28	For ambulances and external contact-obtaining relief
PHC / medical services	9	For first aid
Phones	10	For communication and arranging relief-in rural communities
Flour mill	9	To grind food aid
Communal hall	6	Meeting place, and accommodation for homeless

After the earthquake certain capacities were considered to be stronger than before the earthquake – and hence seem to have been strengthened by the relief programme. These included: leaders (in 33 communities), teachers (in 11), youth groups (5), electricians/masons (6), and pre-school (4). It is instructive to note that in 10 communities the capacity of leaders was considered to have reduced, or been undermined by the response, some had lost respect and influence due to reports of corruption in the distribution process. There were a higher numbers of phones, vehicles, and both numbers and members of savings and insurance groups as a result of the earthquake. Community halls were considered a stronger resource after the earthquake as other communal areas had been lost and houses had been destroyed.

There were reports of corruption, with communities stating they should have been consulted along with the leaders to ensure aid was distributed fairly. It was felt some committees were only interested in obtaining relief items, with no consideration of longer-term plans-*'our leader has built a new house with the relief items he stole and look at us we are living in tents still!'* On some occasions the role of the leaders was said to be motivated entirely by self-interest- *'the ex-sarpanch before had one car, but now has three -he has become important again'.*

Some Panchayat members revived relief committees which had existed in the past, and in doing so re-established their own power. In some communities this was seen as very temporary in duration and linked only to the initial response, with their strength reducing to the same or lower levels as before the earthquake in 7 of the communities.

4.1 Reduction of vulnerability, and capacity-building interventions

There were few examples of external agencies reducing vulnerability to future disasters. The main contribution was stated to be that of increasing awareness of the relief process itself, and the increased strength, influence and connectedness of leaders. A number of comments on this are recorded-

'We are only becoming more used to disasters and relief, rather than being better prepared to cope with them or avoid them' and

'Now we know the names of the most important people at a high level, so can get help quicker in a time of disaster'

People stated their vulnerability had been increased as they had lost savings, homes, employment, food stores and family members – it appears that few interventions had assisted long term recovery- *'there is no reduction in our vulnerability only increase. Now we have nothing, our savings are gone, our houses are gone. If there is another disaster I don't know what we will do.'*

Communities stated that their contact with the government, block-level administrators and relief agencies had increased their capacity to help themselves as it gave them the contacts that would assist them to call for assistance in case of another emergency. The increase in numbers of telephones illustrated the importance of access to external contacts and communication during a disaster. The distribution of contact lists, posters on housing design and booklets on the government rehabilitation packages were considered to have reduced vulnerability. Cash interventions in particular were reported as having increased peoples capacity to choose their own priorities and increase livelihood security, and were seen as especially useful when linked to rehabilitation of their own houses. Distribution of building materials allowed communities to decide on how to build and make their own decisions about the design and size of shelters.

Women stated their capacity and confidence had increased due to their involvement in the response and contact with outside agencies and those locally in higher profile positions such as leaders, teachers and pre-school staff. There was an increased awareness of the importance of savings and insurance schemes with new schemes being set up (evidence of 2-3 were seen), and with membership of established schemes having increased up to 100% in one community. Although livelihood interventions and training were seen to have increased capacity and

potentially reduced future vulnerability by allowing people to replace savings, in general they were seen as being aimed at skilled people only and those already engaged in such activities and as a result, didn't increase the number of skilled people overall. The lack of long-term support to re-establish livelihoods, particularly farming, housing construction, water supply (particularly to farms), within the response meant there was little or no lasting benefit to community members: they felt the response provided temporary relief only and had limited impact on rehabilitation and recovery- *'everything we have been given is now gone, when the food was eaten we had nothing.'*

To some extent this reflects the situation before the earthquake. In many areas in recent years, farming has failed annually although seed inputs were given, water was still seen as the limiting factor with little or no support given to increase supplies. Many agencies would have considered such rehabilitation interventions beyond the scope of emergency relief, hence limiting possible impact on reduction of vulnerability, and mitigation.

Despite the rhetoric of earthquake-proof housing, people did not feel that appropriate materials had been supplied in sufficient quantities to allow such constructions to be erected. Many of the communities fell within annual/biannual cyclone-affected areas and hence the threat of future cyclones was a very real possibility. Researchers observed that this issue was never mentioned and that the temporary, and semi-permanent structures that they witnessed were unlikely to survive strong winds, with several having collapsed within the first few months of construction. In this way, it is possible that vulnerability may have actually been increased.

4.2 Undermining of Capacities by Agency Intervention

There were several examples stated by communities of outside agencies undermining local capacity. The relocation process, for example, was felt to reduce overall community capacity as key infrastructure, institutions, connections, communal sites were lost, such as: temples, meeting places, electricity and water supplies, leaders houses, and contacts with neighbours. Important institutions such as festival committees, and youth groups would be disrupted by relocation.

Communities stated that when outside contractors were bought into communities to undertake housing construction there was limited involvement of local masons or labour, even when training had been provided. One agency trained masons employing them to work elsewhere, hence reducing local capacity to rebuild. Communities agreed they didn't have the skills to undertake some of the earthquake-proof housing projects but objected to outside contactors/staff being hired to undertake work they could do such as paperwork and unskilled building work.

The credibility of several DEC partner agencies had been eroded, according to communities, as they had made promises concerning shelter and other interventions that they were unable to keep. It was stated that this would affect the partner’s credibility and capacity to work in the area in the future.

4.1 Recommendations made by the Community Members-

- Water-harvesting structures are needed on farms and community water supplies should be re-established. The chronic water shortage must be addressed for recovery and reduction of future vulnerability;
- There should be greater consultation with communities over important local capacities that agencies could build and strengthen;
- Greater dissemination of contacts was desired, both for block and national level. Community telephones and emergency hotlines were suggested;
- Information on earthquake-proofing should be made more widely available and there should be training offered in order for communities to understand, not only masons and skilled people as the majority of people will be left to build shelters without professional assistance;
- Communities wanted more involvement in the whole relief process, in order that they understand it better and could better organise the response in the future;
- A relief committee should be formed/retained and responsibilities should be allocated in case of future emergency;
- One community shelter should be constructed which is earthquake and cyclone proof and which is supplied with first aid materials, rescue materials, stocks of water and communication equipment. There should also be several designated and trained first aid people in each community;
- The role of the Taluka level control room should be reinstated and reviewed;
- There should be assistance given to developing community-level contingency plans and to update those that exist already;
- Women stated that they wanted more information on insurance and access to savings schemes;
- There should be a focus on the links between livelihood and recovery, rehabilitation and reduction of vulnerability;
- There should be a greater focus on long term sustainable inputs by external/international agencies as in general the immediate needs appear largely to be taken care of by local or regional organisations

5. Treatment of Community Members by Agencies

Communities reported different levels of treatment during the response period. Initially, people in several badly-affected communities complained they had not been treated sensitively. External organisations would not accept that they were not interested in relief and needed time to grieve- *'we had not yet buried our dead and we were expected to stand in line to collect relief items, I refused to open my door - what use is food to the dead?'* Other comments were- *'staff were always rushing, in a hurry and pushing us to take things'* and *'at first we only wanted sympathy, not queues or things'.*

In the later stages of relief, after the initial contact with agencies had been made, communities generally felt they were treated more appropriately- *'NGO people gave relief very peacefully (shanti) and in an appropriate manner'* and *'the people that came were kind and helped us'.*

A common complaint concerned communication with agency staff, that things were not explained properly. Language was an issue with staff from other areas or from other countries; communities complained of a lack of dialogue and lack of introductions and said this made them feel bad as they did not know who gave them what and where things the relief items were coming from- *'we don't know the names of some of the agencies that came, we asked everyday, but they never gave their names, or some gave a card or name in English, they couldn't speak our language so we never knew who they were, so how can we tell you who gave us what'.*

This lack of information led to confusion over the purpose of some of the materials that appeared to have been dumped. Communities stated that they felt bad that they didn't understand what they were for or when they came. There was much confusion over the village adoption scheme and provision of cheques for compensation and people were uncertain where to go for assistance.

The processes used by agencies sometimes were felt to be inappropriate and to 'make people feel bad'. Some were considered unacceptable to certain groups, such as women and particular social groups, resulting in feelings of neglect and frustration- *'we felt bad when clothes were just thrown at us from trucks'.*

There were a small number of complaints about agencies ignoring customs and culture- *'how could I go and eat at the kitchen with higher caste families? I waited until they finished and then there was nothing left for my family'.* Two specific examples relating to accommodation and attire were consistently bought up by those interviewed. Women felt that their views were ignored or not even requested. Over the issue of relocation, many women stated they were not consulted and did not like the new plans. They were used to their neighbours and would lose space for their animals and water supplies. The privacy of their courtyards would be lost, and the housing was not in the traditional style or according to their custom. Many of the clothes distributed to women were seen as contrary to custom and culture.

Ends

DMI/HI/Mango
DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat

VOLUME THREE
Sector Reports
Report Two

Shelter

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Section One: Introduction

1. This evaluation report to DEC on the shelter component of the rehabilitation work by its partners is based on
    - Site visits in the project area (three visits in September and October, 2001)
    - Presentation by available members of the project teams
    - Discussion with implementing NGO teams
    - Informal interviews with beneficiary families
    - Interaction with randomly selected community and village leaders
    - Interaction with design consultants and contractors
    - Study of available agency reports

2. *It has not been possible to visit all projects or always meet the key members of the project team. Discussions with communities were generally unplanned, informal and not necessarily with representative groups. No systematic study or survey was conducted. This report, therefore, is predominantly impressionistic. That, however, is not seen as a major disadvantage as this exercise is not attempting a detailed or comprehensive evaluation of a particular project, agency or field partner. The intention is not to pass judgment on any one. It is to see the overall picture and to assess value and potential of the partners' effort in the overall sector response. Idea is also to learn lessons, improve performance to the extent possible and introduce correctives, wherever feasible.*

Section Two: Issues to be evaluated

3. Both the end product and the process are important. In assessing the product our emphasis is on two aspects:

    - The convenience, functional appropriateness, ability to extend, and structural safety of shelter units and overall character of the rebuilt settlement (in situ or on a new site)
    - Asset value of houses (not only a place to live, also an economic asset)

4. The project assessment includes examining the following:

    - Approach to the task
    - Architectural and structural design and settlement plan
    - Unit cost per square foot, total cost of a house unit, overall project cost
    - Quality: structural strength, workmanship and detailing. Also overall character, living environment and space quality of a settlement
    - Backward - forward linkages in employment and income generation
    - Participation
    - Agency's attitude and response to the environmental factors: especially government policy, packages and procedures
    - Advocacy work

5. In evaluating the process, the assumption is that rehabilitation housing is not only replacement of what has been destroyed but reconstruction plus something. If DEC agencies or their partners subscribe to the Sphere Standards and Red Cross Code we assume this means that participation is attempted; local skills and resources are employed; women are given their due place in decision making and ownership share in new assets; local culture, tradition and belief patterns are given due weight and the process, besides producing new houses and settlements, capacitates people, strengthens communities and equips them to face such challenges with poise and live life with dignity.

Section Three: Extent of the reconstruction task

6. Statistics presented by GSDMA, (Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority) in its state level advisory committee meeting in August 2001, seven months after the quake, provide a reasonable, if not comprehensive, picture of the overall housing task, government's involvement and NGO contribution and possible role. Out of 189,071 fully destroyed houses (27,007 of them in four towns) NGOs have assumed responsibility to construct only 8,568 units, 4.5% of the total. Out of the remaining fully destroyed houses (153,496) in rural areas, the huge majority (over 90%) will have to rebuild with the cash subsidy given by the government. The government has also distributed damage compensation to 88% (819,543 out of 968,246) partially damaged houses. Additionally, 60,676 families have been given tents, 141,000 tarpaulin and 146,950 plastic sheets. 217,316 corrugated iron sheets have been also distributed also.

7. Although the statistics do not tell the full story they draw the main contours of the housing task:
    - The number of new houses to be constructed is large (about 200,000)
    - Houses to be repaired and retrofitted are five times as many (almost a million)
    - NGO share in housing reconstruction is marginal less than 4.5% and unlikely to extend 10% of the total, even if fresh commitments are made and honoured
    - As government or its agencies are not constructing any houses for the disaster victims and NGO coverage is small, a very large number of houses (90% of the destroyed and damaged) will be constructed, repaired and retrofitted by the beneficiaries themselves.

8. These facts points to a 'people driven' rehabilitation strategy and has significant bearing on DEC partners' choices, investment plans and action programmes.

Section Four: Context

9. The main features of the operating environment under which DEC partner agencies' shelter response takes place include the following:

- Size of the task: Over a million houses to be reconstructed , repaired and retrofitted; hundreds of school, health centre, anganwadi, panchayat buildings, community centres to be repaired, retrofitted and constructed; four towns (Bhuj, Bhachau, Rapar, Anjar) to be partially/ fully rebuilt
- Coverage: There is a wide geographic spread in many districts (21), talukas (181) and villages (7633) plus the above four towns in Kutch district
- Emergency: Nine months after the quake a majority of victims remain homeless, villages and towns razed, many livelihoods still at risk, and the local economy in shambles. There are frequent complaints of bureaucratic delay, and administrative inaction and corruption, which are supported by an often critical and hostile media.
- Government: There is a dominant and assertive government presence with wide ranging policies, programmes and assistance packages; political compulsions and constraints and a reasonably open and accessible administration
- Resources: There are sufficient financial resource from the central and state government, supported by local and international donations, and loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank
- Institutions: World Bank and ADB have a large investment plan (US$1.5 billion), relevant experience, and can exert considerable influence on government's thinking, policies and programmes.
- International NGOs in good numbers with experience, resources and agenda.

10. Local context:

- A variety of local NGOs from different parts of India: religion based, with political affiliations, business/industry promoted, philanthropic, professionals managed and motivated volunteers
- Local NGOs inclined to work together in partnership and connected through networks
- Vigilant, critical and demanding local press and other media organs
- Communities: resilient, generally cooperative and politically agile earthquake hit communities. Vocal and organized urban communities
    - Disasters: History of natural disasters in Gujarat, especially a succession of droughts, cyclone and earthquake in the recent past;
- Economy: Strained economy--agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and industry-- due to adverse environmental factors, recurrent natural disasters and general backwardness of the desert region
- Settlements: Rich heritage and tradition in built environment, especially in Kutch. Distinct morphology of rural settlements; local housing that is highly sensitive to the local climate, culture, and economy; skilled craftsmen; local materials (tiles and stone); and strong traditions of urban planning, urban design and civic spaces.
    - Services: There is a wide choices in professional services for architectural and structural design and settlement planning from across the country. Also national and international experts on earthquake safety

Section Five: Issues and Choices

11. The issues and choices for DEC partners in view of the above were:

    - Strategic intervention or routine projects?
    - Policy advocacy or fieldwork or both?
    - Immediate results or long-term benefits?
    - Construction or education?
    - Communities or contractors?
    - Urban, rural or both?
    - Housing or development?

12. Also, what is the judicious use of limited financial and institutional resources in view of relative inexperience in the shelter field?

Section Six: the Response

13. Though diverse, the response has been predominantly project biased. Intervention has been less strategic and more routine. Advocacy is almost absent. Construction, especially new construction, not repair or retrofitting, is the main activity. Contractors, not communities, are principal builders. NGOs' involvement is almost exclusively rural as cities are omitted from

project activities. Partnership is often unidimensional. Plans, processes and products are mainly shaped by the consultants, often urban trained and biased, and unfamiliar with rural conditions. Innovations in design, technology and organizations are few. Costs, both construction and organizational, are routinely high. The products, both houses and new villages, leave much to be desired: in appropriateness of design, construction quality, architectural form, beneficiary satisfaction, employment benefits to communities, community empowerment and in laying pitch for long term development.

14. The effort, however, is not without its plus points. In each of the above areas there are strategic gains, good processes, satisfactory products and organizational innovations: examples are SCF and Abhiyan's partnership in temporary shelter; Action Aid and Unnati's advocacy work in Bhachau town development plan; and the concept and work of Abhiyan and Setu.

15. DEC partners' shelter rehabilitation work is diverse and mainly includes the following
    - Temporary shelter
    - Permanent housing: in-situ and relocation
    - Training, especially mason training
    - Education in earthquake safe construction
    - Material production (marginal)
    - Repair and retrofitting (marginal)
    - Advocacy in town planning (marginal)

16. The diversity in work is observed in the following forms
    - Nature of involvement
    - Size of projects
    - In-situ or relocation option
    - Process orientation
    - Extent, nature and result of participation
    - Quality focus
    - Beneficiary satisfaction
    - Stage of project development
    - Nature of partnership with government, NGOs, communities and other actors in the field
    - Financing pattern
    - Impact on policy and overall rehabilitation effort.

Temporary Shelter:

17. The work by Save the Children Fund / Abhiyan combination and Caritas in temporary shelter represents contrasting styles. Design, cost per unit, method of construction, recyclability of materials used, pattern of agency partnership and community participation differ substantially.

18. **SCF/Abhiyan.** Over 24,000 units were constructed in 250 villages through 21 partner agencies in six months by Abhiyan, in partnership with SCF. This shows how local NGO's

can scale up, marshall considerable managerial resources and materials (including 12 million mangalore tiles from Morbi, and 250,000 bamboos from Assam), and are then able to work with funders, suppliers, NGO/CBO partners and communities to complete this large operation on time. The cost was low at Rs. 4000 (£60) for a unit of 225 sq.ft, and the design was conducive to community-managed construction. The centralized supply of building materials (cement, bamboo, bamboo mats and tiles) and supervision by Abhiyan's partner agencies was cost effective. Beneficiaries are now generally satisfied, though a few would have preferred higher ceiling and different walling materials (instead of bamboo mats) to ensure privacy, safety, security and longer life. Considering that the temporary shelter is needed for a longer period (one or more years) until permanent houses are built, some want longer-lasting structures. A more significant benefit of the participatory method (in which beneficiaries dig foundations, raise plinths, and construct walls) is that it put the shocked communities to work. Investment in reusable materials (tiles and bamboo) indicates judicious use of available resources and a long-range strategy.

19. **Caritas** constructed over 10,000 temporary shelter units. The approach is in stark contrast to SCF/Abhiyan's. Each unit costs twice as much (Rs. 9000=£134). Contractors, not communities, built them. The plastic used in construction may cause a pollution problem in the long run. Though heat protection is inbuilt and care to details is noticeable (units are lockable, a strongly felt need of the homeless) there are adverse comments on the shape of the unit (semi-circular), discomfort due to inadequate cross ventilation and perceived fire hazard (no serious incidence is reported). Caritas' rationale for employing contractors include:
    - Need for speed
    - Wide coverage
    - Lack of community base or contact in selected village
    - Absence of `local' NGO/CBO partners

    The design, materials, cost and absence of community participation are direct consequence of contractor involvement.

20. **ActionAid/Unnati.** Although the number is small (500 units) the principle of minimum external intervention is characteristic of Action Aid/Unnati's approach to temporary shelter. The aim was to provide minimum financial assistance to facilitate self-help construction, "on their own site, of their own design, with their own efforts". Investment ranges between Rs. 2000 to Rs.6000 (£30-90). Visibility is low (no separate site, no distinct presence) but beneficiary satisfaction is high.

21. Though these efforts -and others not mentioned here- are not insignificant, DEC partners could have done more in this area. A reasonably secure and habitable temporary shelter contributes to recovery from the shock and encourages an early return to normal life while buying time so essential for the long-term rehabilitation planning process. DEC agencies were in the field early for the relief work, and had a better assessment of ground conditions and community's needs. They could have played a more informed advocacy role in relation to temporary shelter at a stage when the government was undecided. As the cost is small and the product is simple, with resources at their disposal, even if delivery was managed through

contractors, they could both have provided much needed assistance and played a useful role in policy and programme development.

Relocation Projects

22. Shifting a village to a new site is inherently more difficult as it entails overcoming community resistance, finding an acceptable new site, handling complex socio-political-divisions among groups and subgroups, satisfying different interest lobbies and incorporating existing diversity in the new design. It is also a comparatively higher cost option. Following the earthquake an overwhelming majority of villages rejected government's earlier invitation and option to relocate. Not many DEC partners have opted to work in relocation villages as it requires organizational capacity and preparedness for deeper involvement in community processes, design and construction work, and elaborate post-construction resettlement and readjustment process etc.

23. **FICCI-CARE's** involvement in Moti-Chirai is an organizational challenge. Though a consultative design process was attempted, neither the house designs nor the new layout -a grid-iron pattern of suburban variety- reflect successful resolution of complex caste and sub-group issues. The village is divided into two/three sites. The layout design prepared by a Delhi-based consultant was rejected by the community. A new layout has been designed by a community-appointed consultant. The contractor was uncertain which plan to follow, did not know, at the time of site visit how many houses will be constructed, had not seen the service layout and did not know who would provide and pay for them. Stronger elements in the village are reported to have assumed control. Neither the agency, nor contractor, nor community groups expressed confidence in the outcome.

24. An international agency is better advised to avoid the high risks of a relocation project, especially as it is the community's internal dynamics and political under-currents, more than the agency's professional skill and rational factors that determine the outcome. If the challenge of relocation is to be accepted an adequate professional support, both on the design and social side, is a precondition. A prolonged involvement, in pre-planning, design, construction and post construction settlement is unavoidable. An inadequate response on these issues could result in failure, both for the community and the agency.

Permanent Housing

25. In view of the required scale and speed of construction of new permanent houses DEC partners' response is evidentally marginal. However, in strategic positioning, product quality and potential impact it has many interesting features.

26. **FICCI–CARE's** permanent housing programme is relatively ambitious with diverse involvement. The plans include

    - Construction of over 10000 new houses, in-situ and on relocation sites
    - Mason training -skill upgrading in earthquake safe construction for the practicing masons and skill training for unskilled workers including women) in collaboration with a cement company, Ambuja Cement
    - Material production units (hollow concrete blocks) as an income generating enterprise, assisted by Development Alternatives.

    Other features of the FICCI-CARE approach are an absence of local NGO partners in construction, and a tripartite partnership between government, FICCI-CARE and communities in financing project and construction through contractors. FICCI-CARE had a diverse activity mix (construction, training, income supplementation, material production), which displayed interesting potential.

27. **EFICOR (TearFund)** hired the services of a Delhi-based NGO consultant (a partnership that started in Latur), for its village reconstruction projects, used a special (and alien) technology in roof construction, employed a Bombay based contractor, and is spending Rs. one lakh (about £1,430) per house. It has invested its own funds and employed no local person -skilled or unskilled- in construction. By contrast, **Action Aid / Unnati** working in the village of Lunva, depends largely on community contribution (mainly damage compensation received from the government plus some savings and borrowings). They have confined their involvement to assistance in design, arranging community consultation, mason training, guidance in earthquake-safe construction, arranging skilled construction labour, and quality supervision. No contractor is involved, there is no direct cash subsidy, and a mason was used in the place of a qualified engineer as site supervisor. There was also effective community participation.

28. Some of the `participatory construction' projects require beneficiaries to contribute unskilled labour in ongoing construction work carried out by contractors (digging foundation, carrying bricks, watering walls). Christian Aid's partner **Manas** has erected steel-frame structures with mangalore-tiled roof through a contractor and left construction of walls and providing doors and windows to the community. The construction method and phasing of work ensures speedy construction, cost saving, and effective participation.

29. Concern's partner **Nav Sarjan** is concentrating mainly on its traditional constituency of Dalits and attempting to convert a part of the subsidy into a loan to be recovered in a community revolving fund. Another Concern partner, Gram Vikas Trust, has confined its contribution to 5 to 10 bags of cement, 5 days of mason wages and some food for work per unit. Helpage International has confined its housing intervention to building a small room for the aged. Diversity in agencies' work is manifest in size of houses, house cost and unit cost of construction, use of materials, nature and quality of participation and very different degrees of beneficiary satisfaction.

Section Seven: General Observations

30. **Design.** Adequate size (traditional village houses are big as they are both home and store for farmers and home and workshop for handicraft workers), lower cost (limited funds), structural safety against earthquake and cyclone threat, easy and structurally safe extendibility (as agencies provide only a `core' house, extension by the owner is necessary), and protection against both heat and cold are some of the main considerations in the design of a house.

31. A typical rural house in Kutch and Saurashtra consists of three space components: a core living and storage space, semi-covered verandah and enclosed open-to-sky yard in front or rear. The agency focus is mainly on the core component -a room. Some designs incorporate a verandah. But the `overall house concept' is rarely observed in the consultant's design drawings or construction plan. The design professional's urban education, bias and experience and lack of exposure to rural communities, their needs and living habits are also reflected in the design.

32. **Cost.** Not much conscious effort is visible in cost-saving, except for elaborate work by Abhiyan in the form of design development (architectural and structural), material options, detailing and construction management method. There is a wide range in the cost of DEC partners' projects -Rs 380/£6 per sq.ft. in Raidhanpar (Caritas), Rs. 318/£5 per sq.ft in Moti Chirai (FICCI-CARE), Rs. 130/£2 per sq.ft. in Abhiyan's Bhunga, and Rs. 610/£9 per sq.ft. for a Health Centre at Ratnal (Merlin). This shows that cost reduction is possible without compromising on construction area, earthquake safety and quality. It appears that neither the clients (DEC partners) nor the professionals engaged by them have accorded priority to the cost factor. Agencies' lack of experience in construction, professionals' lack of orientation in low cost materials, technology and construction methods, the absence of cost ceiling and standards and cost monitoring procedures are resulting in higher costs. It may be mentioned here that these costs do not include consultant fees, agency overheads, and land and services costs.

33. Not only the unit cost of construction (cost per sq.ft.), but also the size and cost of a unit also vary substantially. FICCI-CARE's house in Moti Chiari is 324 sq.ft. and costs Rs. 1,02, 930 (£1536). Abhiyan's Bhunga design is 230 sq.ft. and costs Rs 29,870 (£446) including community contribution of Rs. 5560 (£83) in cash and labour. World Vision's 322 sq.ft. house is estimated to cost Rs. 1,44,000 (£215). EFICOR's 325 ft. house costs Rs. 89000 (£133). Rs. 45000 (£67) is earmarked for a 210 – 230 sq. ft. house by many agencies. The size variation is about 100 sq.ft. (between 250 to 350 sq.ft.) and the cost varies between Rs. 30,000 (£45) to Rs.1,44,000 (£2115). Specifications obviously vary and determine cost. However, all units are of pucca (using proper materials) variety and on earthquake safety there is no compromise. Absence of standards and budgetary control, lack of conscious efforts to reduce cost and reluctance to learn from each other account for wastage and in most cases higher costs.

34. **Incremental Design.** Orientation, experience and skill required in designing a `growing' house (or 'incremental house') are generally lacking. As what is built now is a core house, only a part of what the beneficiary needs, its "extendibility" is important. A good incremental design permits extension without much breaking, and functional efficiency at each growth stage. It also requires proper detailing to enable future extension with structural safety. Both consciousness and effort is generally lacking. Abhiyan's design cell is working on this aspect.

35. **Earthquake Safety.** A Good effort has been made by most DEC partners both to incorporate earthquake-safe features in both houses already built and under construction and to support local capacity building through mason training.In what appears to be a one-off case, Concern's partner, Gram Vikas Trust, possibly due to budgetary constraints with a total investment per unit of less than Rs. 2000 (£30), is not paying attention to this aspect.

36. Earthquake and cyclone safety cannot be compromised. However, in construction work the suggested methods of earthquake-safe construction (three RCC bands, corner strengthening, etc.) is perceived as bottleneck. Some mystification has also crept in. For smaller structures the cost of earthquake resistant features is relatively high. Adoption of this technique requires special educational effort and organizational energy. Though the release of compensation instalments from the government has been made conditional on the use of seismically safe construction methods, the adoption level by communities is not very high. Mason training is useful but not sufficient to ensure safety. Though the need for earthquake-safe design is high in the public memory, in contrast the cyclone threat is generally ignored in design and construction. Adoption of safe construction technique is a major problem in the self-help construction schemes under which a majority of houses will be built. Besides mason training DEC partners can help with developing low cost easy-to-construct options.

37. **Sanitation.** The area of a typical house ranges between 250 to 350 sq.ft. Room, verandah and kitchen are the main components. The verandah, however, in most cases, is small by rural standards (absent in village Raidhanpar and quite spacious in Navsarjan villages). Some agencies are providing bathrooms but not many have opted for a toilet. If rehabilitation is reconstruction plus, there is a good case of the inclusion of a toilet and bathroom unit, and improved sanitation could be a common feature of all rehabilitation housing. In many villages today land for open defecation is scarce and at a long distance due to peripheral growth. The toilet is a priority for women, old people, and children.

38. Provision of toilets and bathrooms, even against initial reluctance and hesitation, is an important step in improving quality of rural living. Proper improvement will also require the provision of a low cost and easy- to-maintain twin pit latrine system. Advocacy is also needed to link up existing rural sanitation projects, government or non-government, with the on-going rehabilitation housing work and help secure the necessary funds for this work.

39. **Water Conservation.** Not many DEC agency projects have developed a response to water scarcity in the area. Rainwater harvesting is not integrated in the design or work plan. A simple device called Paniara, which reduces water contamination and waste is not often

integrated in design (exceptionally, it was observed in Navsarjan self-constructed houses). A toilet pan design which conserves water, developed by PRI, is not in circulation.

40. **In-situ Construction.** The logic of in-situ construction, where houses are to be built on existing plots (different sizes, varying bay width, organic pattern), is violated as a prototype design is repeated without site-specific modifications. The opportunity of reconstruction is not sufficiently used to decongest areas, widen narrow streets and roads, open up spaces for community building and courts and create civic spaces.

41. **Salvage Materials.** Not many agencies are attempting creative use of salvage materials. This would save cost and provide larger houses. Using salvaged material requires orientation, flexibility in design and a strategy. EFICOR's consultant Development Alternatives has prepared a detailed inventory of beneficiaries' salvaged material but not much is in evidence in the design or ongoing work.

42. **Professional Consultants.** The professional consultants engaged to render architectural and structural design and construction management services play a key role in determining nature and quality of the project. Size of unit, design, cost, materials, specifications, method of construction, etc. are usually determined by the professionals. Many professionals engaged for the work are urban in residence, orientation, training and attitude. Many have no rural experience or exposure. The participatory way of working is not part of their training. Cost consciousness is not their attitude. Poor people or villagers are seldom their client. Human development as an integral part of settlement development is not part of their professional work.

43. Experienced and 'development' oriented consultants are also involved. HUDCO has been engaged by FICCI-CARE and Development Alternatives by EFICOR. The Unnati team includes professionals with many years of experience in post-disaster reconstruction. Abhiyan team has relevant experience, ability to attract young professionals with motivation and a systematic way of training. Their orientation and experience reflect in approach to the task, design quality, construction method, construction cost and beneficiary satisfaction.

44. Quality and cost of services is often determined by the distance a consultant is located from the field. Both HUDCO and DA are Delhi-based. DA has engaged a field team consisting of professionals from Delhi. A senior team member visits the field twice a month for monitoring and supervision. HUDCO did not have a local team to guide and participate on a regular basis in Moti Chirai and this was one of the reasons for some of the difficulties in planning of this village.

45. **Advocacy.** Rehabilitation of shelter and settlements is subject to and controlled by government policies, assistance packages and sanction procedures. Various government departments, agencies and systems are involved in damage assessment, implementation and decision-making. Multiple stakeholders are playing various roles. Therefore a lot needs to change in government policy, packages and procedures; method and technique of earthquake-safe construction, entitlements, plan approval procedures, etc.

46. Advocacy is probably the weakest part of the DEC involvement. Both international agencies and their local NGO partners are doing little in this matter. With their status, experience, access to resources and partnership with some of the influential local NGOs they could effectively intervene on policy, organizational design and procedural matters. Putting advocacy work on the agenda, closer relationship and sharing between DEC agencies and field partners and systemic sharing with other concerned agencies would ensure much better results.

47. **Towns.** Besides reconstruction of villages and social and physical infrastructure, a special feature of Gujarat earthquake rehabilitation is the need for almost complete reconstruction of four quake-ravaged towns. A large investment in infrastructure and shelter is planned. Planning work for Bhuj, Bhachau, Anjar and Rapar is in progress. How effective is the reconstruction and what role these towns play in the socio economic development of the region will be influenced by these plans

48. Action Aid/Unnati has mobilized public opinion on the provisions of draft development plan for Bhachau town prepared by a private consultant and has played a lead role in influencing-change in favour of the poor and unorganized. In its consultation work Unnati found that secure land tenure is a strongly felt need of several communities in Bhachau which had lived in the city for years but were still unauthorized. But this is the exception: very few DEC partners are active in Kutch towns. Much needs to be done to influence development plan and investment decisions.

49. **Employment and income.** EFICOR's construction programme in village Nagavaldia includes construction of 288 houses, each unit costing Rs. 89,000 (£133). Out of an approximate investment of Rs. 3 crore (£448,000) only 10% will be spent on unskilled labour and Rs. 50-60 lakhs (£75,000) on skilled labour. While a Bombay-based contractor constructs houses and produces blocks and roofing systems, local people -mostly poor following destruction by the quake and jobless following an erratic monsoon- are unable to earn anything from the investment. Should not such a large investment create some jobs for local people?

50. Internalizing the benefits of such employment for a concerned village community should be a project objective. This can be done in two ways-
    - By inserting a clause in the agreement with the contractor to employ local unskilled labour.
    - By involving local people in the whole process of building.

    The current projects give insufficient attention to this issue, and there is therefore a need to set local employment targets as well as construction targets..

Conclusions

51. There are clear needs to improve the quality of houses under construction, especially with respect to improved designs, greater cost-efficiency, effective community participation, better coordination with consultants and systematic effort for capacity building of partners. A few good projects could lift the tone of the entire operation, and given the current status of rehabilitation work these are badly needed. With the human and financial resources at their disposal DEC agencies could assume a leadership role in respect of housing.

52. Equally important is to focus on strategic issues- advocacy, towns, organizational innovations, the employment link to housing, and construction `resource management'. Though what and how to do it is each partner agency's choice, one way to get started is to view the on-going evaluation exercise as an opportunity for the DEC to form a collective view and to plan mid-course corrections in strategy and design. In this respect the DEC's time-extension can be seen as an opportunity.

DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat

VOLUME THREE
Sector Reports

Report Three

Financial Management

Alex Jacobs, **Mango,** December 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation considers the financial management of the response of DEC member agencies to the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001.

The DEC raised £19m of pooled funds for the survivors of the Gujarat earthquake. This evaluation has taken a broad view of financial management, looking at strategic questions of resource allocation as well as operational questions of financial systems. It is based on interviews with member agency staff, not detailed testing of each member agency's systems.

The nine key findings of the evaluation are:

1. **There was a mis-match between the amount of funds raised, the DEC time limit for expenditure and the needs of beneficiaries. Many member agencies had more money available than they could responsibly spend in nine months.**
2. **Resources have been allocated between member agencies with limited efficiency.**
3. **Member agencies have allocated resources internally with different levels of efficiency.**
4. **Member agencies have operated with different levels of cost-efficiency.**
5. **Financial administration and control has been of a robust professional standard in both member agencies and NGO partners.**
6. **NGO partners have maintained professional levels of financial administration, control and accountability.**
7. **NGO partners have been accountable to the DEC for the funds that they have received. Some have also given financial account to beneficiaries.**
8. **Member agencies and NGO partners have involved programme managers in financial management. (It has not been 'left to the accountant'.)**
9. **Field and head office staff of DEC members have not always understood the DEC's role and operating procedures.**

Findings one to four: strategic issues.

The DEC imposed a nine-month time scale for initial project implementation, ending on 31st October 2001. By that date, DEC member agencies had spent £2.5m on emergency relief. £8.5m had been spent on rehabilitation projects. £0.2m had been spent on DEC direct costs. £7.7m had not been spent: 41% of the total. It is expected that most of this will be spent on on-going rehabilitation activity.

The focus on rehabilitation made the Gujarat response very different to many other humanitarian responses. In financial terms, DEC member agencies have been minor players in a much larger relief and rehabilitation effort which runs to billions of dollars. Moreover, mechanisms in India for relief and rehabilitation have been shown to be very strong.

Some members quickly and effectively matched their distinctive strengths to the needs of the affected population and the local context. Others had difficulty achieving appropriate strategic focus, resulting in highly variable standards of overall efficiency and impact. The nine-month time scale significantly exacerbated these difficulties.

Findings five to nine: operational issues.

Generally, financial management practice was of a robust professional standard on the ground. Appropriately qualified staff were recruited for key financial management positions. Reflecting the commitment of senior managers, this has been the cornerstone of field level financial management.

Member agencies implemented practical financial systems in the field, resulting in professional financial administration, control and reporting. This allowed them to track funds from the DEC appeal through to expenditure, and to provide an accurate account of how funds have been spent. Some member agencies also developed ways of giving financial account to beneficiaries.

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1. Introduction

This evaluation reviews the financial management of the response of DEC member agencies to the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001. It was commissioned by the DEC secretariat in June 2001. The DEC Gujarat appeal was launched on the 2nd February. To date, it has raised £24m. This comprises £19m of pooled funds and £5m of retained funds.

A donation is ‘retained’ if an individual donor specifies that his/her donation is to a particular member agency. It is passed to the member agency, and not available for distribution through the DEC. All other donations are ‘pooled’ and are available to be shared between member agencies. Only pooled funds are subject to the expenditure conditions agreed through the DEC secretariat. Retained funds are subject to internal procedures within member agencies, and the line of accountability runs directly from the agency to their own donors. This evaluation only covers pooled funds.

The eleven DEC member agencies who received funds from the DEC from this appeal were: ActionAid, the British Red Cross Society, CARE, Christian Aid, Concern, Help the Aged, Merlin, Oxfam, Save the Children, Tearfund and World Vision. The table "Summary Financial Statement" shows how funds were distributed between member agencies.

The terms of reference for this evaluation specified that the team should look at financial management in detail, including "the total picture of DEC spend", reviewing:

- "volume of funds allocated under the major DEC programme budget heads."
- "robustness of the systems for allocating and tracking spend from the Appeal phase through to the beneficiaries via the different members including their systems of financial monitoring and reporting."

The terms of reference also required that "the evaluation should make recommendations to the DEC Secretariat and Members about the financial framework for raising, budgeting, allocating and monitoring the appeal funds".

This evaluation has taken a broad view of financial management. It has considered financial management at the strategic and the operational levels. The strategic level has included looking at questions of resource allocation between DEC member agencies and within member agencies. The operational level has included looking at the nuts and bolts of financial administration, control and reporting.

The report is organised around nine key findings. The most general, strategic findings are given first, leading on to findings about more detailed, operational aspects of financial management. Key recommendations have been integrated into the overall DEC evaluation report.

2. Methodology

This evaluation is based on semi-structured interviews with staff from DEC member agencies and their partners in Britain and in India, carried out from August to October 2001. It was led by Alex Jacobs (from the UK) and assisted by Nimish Shah (a prominent chartered accountant from Gujarat). The two evaluators discussed systems and issues with a wide range of finance staff and managers from all of the DEC agencies and a sample of partners.

Due to time constraints, only key systems were reviewed, and then only briefly. Testing them fully would have been an immense job, outside the scope of the evaluation. This evaluation is not an audit of DEC member agencies. The evaluators have largely relied on the goodwill and candour of agency staff. They are extremely grateful for the time that agency staff made available and for the wide-ranging insights so generously shared with them.

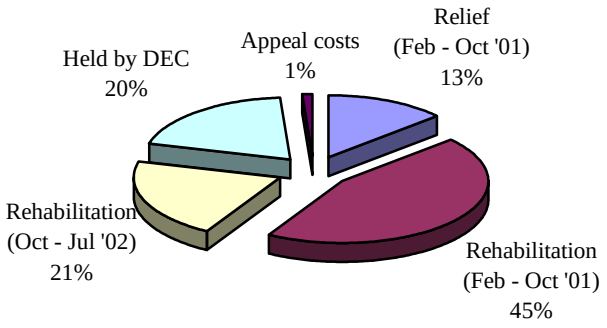
3. Findings

Finding one

There was a mis-match between the amount of funds raised, the DEC time limit for expenditure and the needs of beneficiaries. Many member agencies had more money available than they could responsibly spend in nine months.

3.1.1 Evidence

Chart 1: Use of DEC Pooled Funds
as at 31st Oct 2001



1. From 1st February to 31st October 2001, the DEC appeal raised £19m of pooled funds. Only £11m was requested by member agencies for this nine-month period, comprising £2.5m for emergency relief (13% of the appeal total) and £8.5m for rehabilitation programmes (45% of the appeal total). In addition, the DEC secretariat incurred £0.2m of appeal related costs. £7.8m (41% of the appeal total) had not been requested by agencies to be spent in the initial nine-month period.
2. Five member agencies have requested a total of £4m (21% of the appeal total)) to spend in the next nine month period (1st November 2001 to 31st July 2002). This leaves approximately £3.7m (20% of the appeal total) held by the DEC which had not been requested by agencies at 31st October 2001.
3. Most member agencies disbursed funds to local partner organisations. On 31st October 2001 a number of partner organisations held unspent DEC funds. So it is reasonable to conclude that a minimum of 41% of the appeal total had not been spent at the end of the nine month period, and as much as 50% may not have been spent.
4. The £5m of retained funds raised through the DEC appeal were not subject to any time-limit imposed by the DEC secretariat. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of retained funds were held back, to be used after the time-bound funds had been spent. This means that it is likely that the majority of retained funds had not been spent by 31st October 2001.

3.1.2 Context

- Significant short-term funds were available to many DEC member agencies from DfID and ECHO. These funds were tied to emergency relief activities and much shorter time frames than the DEC (three months for DfID), and were often made available within days of the earthquake. Many agencies used them to fund the first months of emergency relief response, not DEC funds.
- The DEC appeal raised £19m of pooled funds: a large amount compared to other DEC appeals, and approximately 20% of the total funds spent by DEC member NGOs and their sister organisations. The sheer volume of DEC funds made it difficult to spend them all in a tight timeframe. In addition, member agencies raised significant funds from other sources, including their own appeals and from sister organisations. For some agencies, these funds were much greater than DEC funds.
- Local coping mechanisms were strong, with DEC member agencies only contributing a small proportion of overall emergency relief or longer-term rehabilitation assistance. The government, the army, local civil society (including businesses and NGOs) and local communities all played the major role in meeting earthquake victims' immediate needs. While many villages suffer great poverty, Gujarat is the second wealthiest state in India. Significant community support has swung into action for reconstruction. In addition, by the end of March 2001, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank had committed loans of almost $1bn for reconstruction with the promise of substantial additional funds to come.
- It is very hard to deliver rehabilitation assistance in a nine-month period. Effective rehabilitation interventions need real community participation, which takes time to set up and more time to support. Nine months is almost always too short for this. It is well recognised that truncated interventions can cause more harm than good.
- There was confusion about the roles of district and state level government, with co-ordination at one level being over-ridden at the other. This took time to resolve. Local government then took several months to allocate specific construction projects to member agencies, and to approve designs. This delayed many agencies' programmes.

3.1.3 Impact

A compromise had to be found between the DEC's nine-month time constraint and the operating realities. All DEC members struggled with this issue to a greater or lesser extent.

Some member agencies used DEC money to fund the opening months of a longer intervention (e.g. WV, Concern). This approach makes it hard to link DEC funding to specific outputs, as projects started with DEC funds will be completed using funding from other sources.

Other member agencies squeezed rehabilitation activities into a short timeframe with varying degrees of success and efficiency (e.g. Merlin, CARE). For instance, CARE used DEC funds to hire tractors for mechanical ploughing. This met an immediate need. But, as CARE field staff pointed out, was a short term, non-sustainable solution which carries the serious risk of increasing the dependency of beneficiaries on external intervention. CARE field staff contrasted

this approach to the sustainable intervention of creating seed-banks, but explained that the nine-month time limit made this community based approach impossible.

Some member agencies took DEC funds and were not able to spend them in the time available (e.g. Oxfam, BRCS, SCF). This led to the initial time constraint being over-ridden. These agencies, along with ActionAid and Merlin, came to a compromise with the DEC, negotiating extensions. This could be seen as an appropriate action to use funds for the maximum benefit of earthquake victims, rather than being bound by an artificial time limit. But in some cases inappropriate planning was the root of the mis-match between the amount of funds taken and the time needed to use them responsibly. (See findings two and three.)

Some member agencies seemed to be able to work effectively with this constraint (Help Age, Christian Aid). All member agencies invested significant time and effort in dealing with this question. The nine-month time limit acted as an artificial constraint, cutting directly across agencies' operating reality. Almost all managers in the UK and in Gujarat expressed great frustration with the time limit during evaluation interviews. It created additional stress in an already stressful and difficult working environment.

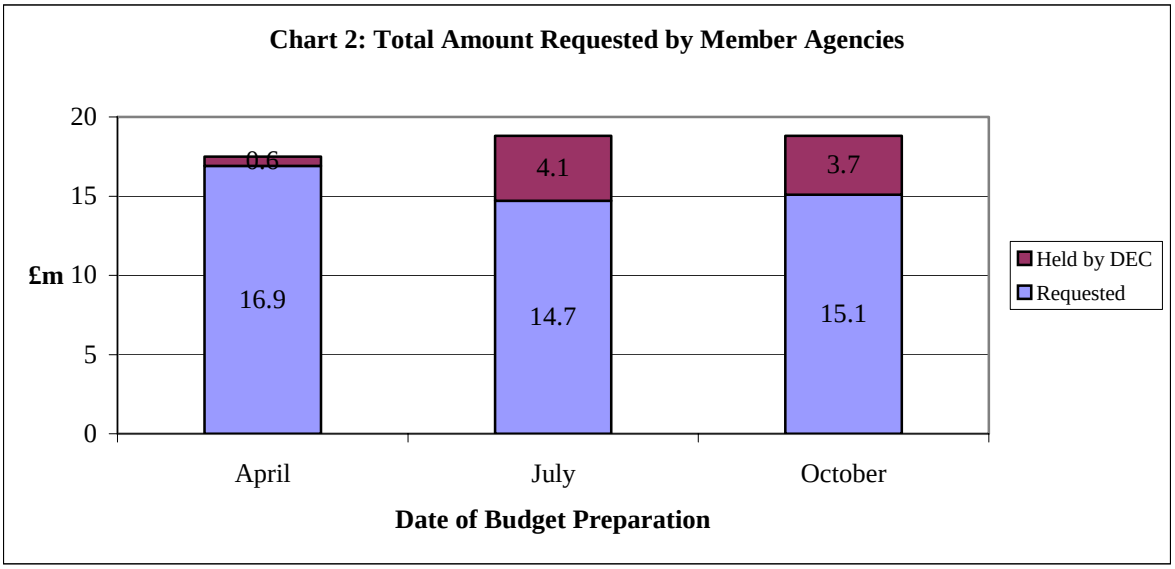
For example, there was wide-ranging debate in the field (at co-ordination meetings culminating in the Ghandidham meetings) and in the UK. Field managers had to spend time thinking about how to handle the artificial constraint, instead of how to run effective programmes.

3.1.4 Comment

Given the context of the strength of civil society in India in general and in Gujarat specifically, it was never likely that member agencies would run a 'classic' humanitarian response, in which they and the UN take the lead in providing basic services to a displaced population, largely in the absence of other major sources of assistance. Many agencies took time to recognise and to get to grips with the implications of this context.
Equally, it appears that the DEC was unable to respond flexibly enough to the situation on the ground. If the DEC exists to do more than provide immediate humanitarian support then the nine-month limit must be reviewed.

Finding two
Resources have been allocated between member agencies with limited efficiency.

3.2.1 Evidence



1. At the end of April 2001, three months after the appeal was launched, £17.5m of DEC pooled funds was available to the members. This was initially allocated using the Indicator of Capacity mechanism (details below). At this stage, the budgets drawn up by member agencies show a total request for DEC funds of £16.9m, leaving £0.6m of funds held by the DEC: **3% of the total**.

2. At the end of July 2001, six months after the appeal was launched, an additional £1.5m had been received, bringing the total DEC pooled funds available up to £19m. £0.2m of costs had been incurred by the DEC secretariat in support of the appeal. So £18.8m was available for distribution to member agencies. At this stage, revised budgets drawn up by member agencies show a total request for DEC funds of £14.7m, leaving £4.1m held by the DEC: **22% of the total.**

3. The end of October 2001 is the end of the nine-month time limit for expenditure of DEC funds. At this stage, the most recent budgets drawn up by member agencies show a total request for DEC funds of £15.1m. The DEC is still holding £3.7m of funds, which have not been requested by members for field projects: **20% of the total.**

4. Over this period, some agencies had significantly adjusted their plans. (See finding three below.) In April 2001, Oxfam requested their full Indicator of Capacity allocation of £4.4m. In July 2001, they reduced this to £1.6m. Subsequently, they negotiated an additional £1m of funding to be spent over an extended period up to the end of July 2002, taking their total request for DEC funds to £2.6m.

5. Over the same period, other agencies could have spent more than they were initially allocated by the Indicator of Capacity mechanism. ActionAid, Help the Aged and World Vision all requested additional funds in excess of their Indicator of Capacity allocation.

6. Due to a shortage of funds, HelpAge India reduced the number of their beneficiaries from 7,500 (for distribution of relief goods) to 1,575 (for shelter and livelihood rehabilitation activities). This change in numbers directly reduced the impact of their rehabilitation work. It also increased the costs, as a second needs-assessment exercise had to be carried out to identify the rehabilitation beneficiaries.

7. Beneficiaries had needs that were not been met within the initial nine-month period.

3.2.2 Context

- Estimates of the total amount of pooled funds available from the appeal increased from £15m after one month to £17.5m after three months to £19m after six months.
- The initial allocations of funds are made according to the established Indicator of Capacity mechanism. This calculates a crude 'Indicator of Capacity' for each UK based member agency based on their world-wide expenditure over the previous three years. DEC member agencies have regularly discussed this mechanism. It is simple to implement and allows quick decision-making in the immediate aftermath of a humanitarian disaster. But, it does not take account of any variation of local operating capacity in different countries.
- When the earthquake struck, HelpAge India had an established programme and partners in India. Concern were in the process of opening a country office. Merlin had never operated in India before. The Indicator of Capacity mechanism takes no account of these important differences in local operating capacity.
- World Vision UK contributed £1.3m of DEC funds to a total earthquake response programme of approximately £12m run by World Vision India; the British Red Cross Society contributed £2.4m of DEC funds to appeals totalling £35m for programmes implemented by the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Indian Red Cross Society; and CARE UK contributed £1.2m of DEC funds to a total programme of approximately £20m run by CARE India. However, the amount of DEC funds allocated to World Vision UK, the BRCS and CARE UK was calculated on the basis of expenditure of these UK organisations. This bears only a limited relationship to the capacity of worldwide networks of organisations to run programmes in India.
- Not all member agencies took their entire Indicator of Capacity allocation. Christian Aid, Merlin and Tearfund all requested less than their allocation. All agencies have been aware that additional funds were available above their Indicator of Capacity allocations.
- Different member agencies took different attitudes to using DEC funds. Some (notably Oxfam) appeared to act on the basis that they had an obligation to take the entire amount that they were initially allocated. For others, the amount of funding available significantly influenced the shape (as well as the scope) of their response (e.g. Merlin).
- Different member agencies have different mandates and different approaches to their work. They do different things. Different humanitarian disasters require different responses. In the early days of a disaster, when an appeal is launched, it is difficult to judge how the response will evolve, and which activities will be most appropriate.

3.2.3 Impact

A great deal has been achieved, with eleven member agencies implementing a wide range of programmes to assist the survivors of the Gujarat earthquake. Approximately £3m of emergency relief was distributed in the first weeks and months after the earthquake. Approximately £13m of rehabilitation programmes are on-going, meeting needs across the state.

However, some funds have been sitting unused, while beneficiaries have needs that have not been met. At the end of October, this amounted to £3.7m, 20% of the total amount of pooled available to DEC member agencies.

3.2.4 Comment

The first weeks of an emergency humanitarian response are always chaotic. Information is scarce and confusing, and needs are overwhelmingly urgent. In these conditions, it is not realistic to expect a perfectly efficient distribution of resources.

Furthermore, there is no direct feedback mechanism between the level of funds raised and the level of funds required. The amount of income raised is determined by the degree to which the British and Irish public wish to give, and heavily influenced by the media. This bears no relation to the ability of member agencies to spend money responsibly in the field (within the time constraints laid down). Reflected through media lenses, it may only bear a limited relation to the needs of beneficiaries. Within the operating context of this disaster, the additional £1.5m funds raised between April and July constituted a problem for member agencies, as much as an opportunity. It was more money to spend in an already tight time frame.

This specific issue was resolved through the pragmatic fund-closing mechanism. However, the principle remains: when the whole DEC apparatus swings into action and an appeal is launched, it is not always clear what the needs are, how agencies can best respond, and as a result how much money they really need. A DEC appeal is a very powerful tool for responding to disasters. It ensures a minimum level of resources. But, it is not surprising that a surplus of funds is raised for some disasters and a deficit for others.

However, DEC member agencies have an obligation to attempt to distribute resources as efficiently as possible between them. This is a direct application of two fundamental principles: (a) the moral and legal obligation to use funds as donors intended them to be used (the terms of this DEC appeal were to “help the survivors” of the Gujarat earthquake), and (b) the first principle of the Red Cross Code of Conduct: the humanitarian imperative comes first.

In order to achieve the overall objective of the DEC, these principles have to over-ride individual organisational priorities (such as the perceived need to maximise an organisation’s own funding and organisational activity). Most member agencies accept that the needs of beneficiaries are not always best served by an organisationally specific response – and that they as an individual agency are not always best placed to respond to all needs in every emergency.

The current Indicator of Capacity mechanism does not encourage member agencies to consider the total amount of funds available as a resource for the united British and Irish humanitarian agencies to use collectively in the best interest of beneficiaries. Funds are automatically carved up between member agencies. Each member agency sees a pre-determined percentage of the total and as a result is encouraged to think and act independently.

The DEC Secretariat relies on member agencies to request funds from the DEC, initially up to their Indicator of Capacity limit. Requests are made based on budgets. Budgets are drawn up from project plans, which should be based on strategic objectives. Specifically, budgets are prepared at the four and twelve week stages. Inaccuracies in individual members' budgets have caused significant inefficiency in overall resource allocation.

Finding three
Member agencies have allocated resources internally with different levels of efficiency.

3.3.1 Evidence

1. Some member agencies had organisational strategy and structures in place that allowed them to develop appropriate plans quickly.

Example 1: Help Age India
Help Age India is an example of good practice, demonstrating efficient resource allocation. They undertook high impact government and NGO lobbying on the back of efficient direct service provision. Their field staff believe that their advocacy work will have a greater long-term impact than their service provision. For instance, it led to the position of a desk officer dedicated to the needs of older people in the Vulnerability Group in the Collector's Office in the local state government structure. Advocacy work is made credible by fieldwork. But it only represents a small proportion of the total costs of the programme.

The quality of their initial planning can be seen in the changes between the budgets prepared for the DEC at the one, three and six months stages after the earthquake. The table below shows a summary of the amounts budgeted for all their programme activities.

NB Each budget covers the same overall programme. The 'one month', 'three month' and 'six month' labels refer to when the budget was prepared or revised, not to the length of the implementation period.

Table 1: Help Age India Key Programme Activities

All figures in £'000.

Programme activity	One month budget	Three month budget	Six month budget
Mobile medical care	24	24	26
Distribution of relief items	470	392	392
Livelihood support	94	186	191
House rebuilding support	142	398	406

These figures show:

- The choice of programme activities did not change from the first month of intervention.
- Existing programme activities were scaled up as more funds became available. (£175k of these additional funds came from the DEC.)
- Less could be spent on relief items than initially planned, reflecting the limited role of DEC member agencies in meeting immediate humanitarian needs.
- More will be spent on house rebuilding support than initially planned, reflecting the needs expressed by beneficiaries. This has been a common experience for member agencies.

2. Other member agencies changed their plans more substantially between the budgets prepared after one, three and six months (and later). Project design was based on assumptions that were subsequently seen not to have held true. This has included changes of activities within overall programme goals which have not impacted on the overall budget, and some changes which have impacted on the overall budget.

Example 2: Concern
Concern saw significant change in their planned programme activities across the six month period. Their budgeted programme activities were:

Table 2: Concern Key Programme Activities

All figures in £'000.

Programme activity	One month budget	Three month budget	Six month budget
Temporary shelter	95	95	226
Distribution of relief items	251	251	267
Mid-term and permanent shelter	141	266	431
Schools rebuilding	141	141	-
Local community offices rebuilding	100	-	-
Livelihood support	80	80	6
Community/NGO training	25	50	26
Contingency	62	66	-

These figures show:
- Significant changes in the choice of activities to undertake, and in the scale of implementation for those activities.
- The focus of rehabilitation activities changed from a fairly equal spread of resources across four main activities (on the one month budget) to 93% being spent on one: mid-term and permanent shelter (on the six month budget). This was in response to the needs expressed by the Indian NGOs with which Concern is working.
- Expenditure on relief items went ahead very close to the initial budget.

Example 3: Merlin
Merlin originally budgeted for a medical response to an outbreak of disease, which did not materialise. As a result, planned expenditure on staff & staff support costs decreased from £129k on the one-month budget to £83k on the six-month budget. Other administrative and support costs were also substantially lower than originally budgeted. After their one-month budget, they increased the level of overall spend from £343k to £465k, and it has remained at that level. Planned expenditure on health facility infrastructure increased from £79k on the one-month budget to £177k on the six month budget, and is currently forecast to come in at £245k.

These figures show a flexible and reactive approach to planning similar to Concern.

Example 4: Oxfam
Oxfam had the most difficulty in this area. Their budgeted programme activities funded from DEC pooled funds were:

Table 3: Oxfam Key Programme Activities

All figures in £'000.

Programme activity	One month budget	Three month budget	Six month budget
Distribution of relief items	194	126	126
Livelihood support	1,463	1,738	358
Mid-term and permanent shelter	591	1,138	50
Water and sanitation	350	213	169
Community health promotion	-	149	62

These figures speak for themselves. They show:
- Huge variation between the scale of activities planned within the first three months, and at the six month mark.
- Some change in the choice of activities undertaken.

3.3.2 Context

- Some DEC member agencies have been unclear as to how the DEC operates. This has influenced their approach to project planning, with different agencies taking very different approaches to budgeting. (See also findings two and nine.)
- Some assumed that no movement of funds between different budget lines was acceptable without prior approval from the DEC secretariat (e.g. CARE). Others assumed that there was complete flexibility to re-allocate costs between different budget lines, so long as the total amount of the budget did not change (e.g. Merlin).
- Some agencies budgeted in a great deal of detail. Others included some very general budgets with huge individual lines. For instance, BRCS sent a budget to the DEC with their six-month finance report which is split into 20 lines, covering a total of £2,428k. It includes a single line item of £744k for "reconstruction of public health facilities". In contrast, Merlin's entire budget of 47 detailed lines comes to £465k.
- The total amount that the appeal would raise was not known for some time, and was seen by some member agencies as a moving target, which made planning difficult. Others found the cut-off estimates provided by the DEC (e.g. the £15m figure at the 4-week mark) helpful in developing plans.
- Different agencies have very different levels of experience of operating in India, of responding to humanitarian disasters in general and earthquakes in particular, and very different management structures. They also appear to have different abilities to

institutionalise organisational experience, and to act on previous lessons learned to develop appropriate strategy.

- The overall task of reconstruction and rehabilitation in Gujarat is vast beyond the dreams and capacities of NGOs, adding to significant development needs from before the earthquake. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank estimate that the cost of direct reconstruction alone is $2.3bn. The cost in terms of economic disruption is estimated at a further $2.2 bn.
- It is estimated that the government will be responsible for at least 90% of the reconstruction of shelter in Gujarat, and for an equally vast majority of community buildings (e.g. health centres and primary schools).

3.3.3 Impact

Some member agencies have planned their activities efficiently, and implemented them within an overall strategy. This ensures a high level of impact in the short term, and a strong chance of on-going impact into the future.

Other member agencies have developed overall programme objectives as the response has evolved. This approach allowed them to meet needs as funding permitted, as they developed their capacity on the ground, and as they were perceived by field staff or expressed by beneficiaries. This is a pragmatic approach: it gets the money spent on short-term interventions (short-term, in this case, meaning anything up to two years). But the lack of a clearly defined overall strategy creates two serious risks. It provides no guarantee that medium or long-term impact will be attained or maximised. It also increases the risk that programmes are developed in response to organisational or donor imperatives, ahead of the needs of beneficiaries.

The direct costs of repeated planning exercises should not be under-estimated. Days of staff time and of partners' staff time are required to develop, refine and disseminate each plan.

Two key results stem from the inefficient allocation of resources within some member agencies. Firstly, less impact is achieved than might have been by the individual agency. Secondly, funds are tied up by inefficient agencies which could have been used more productively by other member agencies. The overall allocation of resources between member agencies becomes less efficient and the collective impact suffers.

3.3.4 Comment

Meaningful programme planning is only possible within the framework of carefully considered strategy. Weaknesses at the level of programme planning are a reflection of weaknesses in strategic planning.

Generally organisations which had pre-defined, limited strategic aims (notably ActionAid and HelpAge India) had the most effective programme planning in the Gujarat earthquake response, and this led directly to their achieving the most impact. Others either found it difficult to develop appropriate strategy or difficult to make their structures work to deliver that strategy.

The Red Cross response benefited from having a very clear dividing line between relief activities and rehabilitation activities. Relief activities were managed by the Federation, dominated by an ex-pat presence that peaked at 150 delegates. They delivered Red Cross emergency relief assistance such as running a temporary field hospital. In the rehabilitation phase, the British Red Cross is taking more of a lead on a specific project. DEC funding has been used in both phases.

Other DEC member agencies found the transition from relief to rehabilitation harder to manage. This has had a serious impact, as member agencies will spend well over 80% of DEC funds on rehabilitation activities. A relief-based operating strategy is inappropriate for long-term rehabilitation work – fundamentally different principles apply. Concern, Merlin, Oxfam and Save the Children all found this particularly difficult, with field staff (who were often relief-oriented) developing programme activities in the absence of clearly defined high-level operating strategy.

All agencies need to take a pragmatic view about matching donors' funds to beneficiaries' needs. However, some agencies appear to have been donor driven, not needs driven. It seems very unlikely that Merlin would have responded to the Gujarat earthquake if DEC funding had not been available. Save the Children's staff described a process of "dynamic planning" in the field, within parameters set by the overall amount of funds provided by different donors for broadly defined activities.

One of the key influences informing field-level strategic planning has been the issue of staffing. By and large, those organisations which employed and relied on Indian managers achieved much more appropriate strategic focus in their activities. This point also relates directly to questions of cost and efficiency, discussed in finding four below.

Finding four:
Member agencies have operated with different levels of cost-efficiency.

3.4.1 Evidence

1. Some agencies chose to import emergency relief items on high profile flights. Others were able to purchase similar goods (including buckets, clothes and tents) locally, or from neighbouring countries.
2. The purchase price of tents used during the initial relief phase varied from less than 2,000 rupees for a simple 18' x 20' tent purchased in Delhi to over 6,000 rupees (137 USD) for a more complicated 12' x 12' tent. Tents bought from outside India or Pakistan were the most expensive. This approach incurred significant additional costs, including transport (airfreight) and the time of international staff.
3. Some agencies deployed Indian managers who arrived in Bhuj within days of the earthquake, and made a personal commitment to stay for two years or more. Notably, World Vision's senior field managers have made this commitment. The same senior staff carried out the assessments, wrote the proposals, and now manage the programme. This is highly cost-efficient. Local NGO partners by and large have had very low levels of staff turnover.

4. Other member agencies have had a high level of staff turnover (for a variety of reasons). Concern, Merlin and Oxfam have all employed three different expat programme co-ordinators on the earthquake response so far. These three agencies and Save the Children have all seen large number of expatriate logisticians, advisors and managers staffing their field offices for short periods of time (the majority staying for six months or less).
5. In October 2001, some agencies paid drivers 4,000 rupees a month or less. Others paid drivers 12,000 rupees a month. In October, the market rate in Bhuj is approximately 4,000 rupees. It is likely to have been higher in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. It is unlikely ever to have reached 12,000 rupees a month.
6. Beneficiaries of VHAI, a local partner of Christian Aid, pointed out that VHAI was paying a premium on locally-purchased rehabilitation materials. VHAI then delegated negotiating authority to community representatives, and the cost of a wooden kiosk for a local trader fell from 7,000 Rps to 4,500 Rps.
7. Agencies have incurred very different levels of direct building costs. For example, CARE (using contractors) has built permanent houses at a cost of 300 – 320 rupees per square foot. Abhiyan (a local NGO network working with Save the Children) has built permanent houses at a cost of approximately 130 rupees per square foot, through substantial community participation. Merlin's health centres work out at a cost of approximately 610 – 645 rupees per square foot. These costs do not include organisational overheads, design, supervision or any on-going service costs for the houses. In Merlin's case, one-off buildings have been constructed far away from their field office. This is always expensive for both the contractor and the client.

3.4.2 Context

- Local markets were put under great strain by the earthquake and subsequent influx of relief money. Availability and prices fluctuated enormously but goods were basically available.
- Staff turnover is a major cost driver in NGO work. It creates direct costs (recruitment, induction, travel) and indirect costs (team disruption, loss of learning and focus, changes of direction, the need to rebuild external relationships).
- Expat staff are a very great deal more expensive than Indian staff. Salaries of managers are four to eight times higher, and support costs are also high (including international airfares, rest and recuperation, and UK based recruitment costs). Many Indian managers demonstrated project management skills that were as good as or better than those of expatriates.
- Many expat staff have the benefit of familiarity with individual organisations (though not all expat staff employed had previous experience of their agency), and a shared view of the world and the role of international NGOs with headquarters-based staff.
- However, expats who are not familiar with India have to learn much about the local context, and are more likely to take inappropriate decisions. Indian managers are more likely to understand the local context. Many Indian staff employed by or working in partnership with DEC member agencies appeared to have a very deep commitment to the people they worked to help, based on a different concept of charity than that which motivates many itinerant expatriate aid workers.
- Some member agencies found it difficult to attract well-qualified Indian staff, particularly as they were only able to offer short-term employment contracts.

3.4.3 Impact

Some agencies have achieved more impact at lower cost than others. In general, those that worked through Indian-managed structures have achieved more. Those that worked with an expat-managed response, informed by an 'emergency relief' operating approach, achieved less. The greater the level of expat involvement, the lower has been the cost-efficiency.

The influx of funds has an immediate impact on the local market, sending the price of local goods and services such as vegetables and accommodation rental soaring. When international agencies pay inflated prices for goods and services they not only push the price of goods out of the reach of the poorest, but they also undermine the respect that people have for the agencies themselves, and the sense of human solidarity that they seek to nurture.

3.4.4 Comment

Different organisations always work with different levels of cost-efficiency. Ways of working are subtly different, and many important benefits are delivered which do not have a direct cost implication. Cost-efficiency is a crude measure, which is rightly viewed with some scepticism in the NGO sector.

However, the level of difference described above is striking. All NGOs have a serious obligation to use funds in the most cost-efficient way possible, within constraints of time, quality and ethics.

Some DEC member agencies have achieved impressive levels of cost-efficiency. Often this has been achieved by Indian partner NGOs. Others that work through Indian-managed structures with effective community participation, such as ActionAid, have also achieved a great deal per pound spent. They have generally negotiated the cheapest prices for goods and services provided locally.

Organisations such as CARE and World Vision are delivering very large rehabilitation programmes from their operating base. The scale of programmes supported from fixed administrative costs improves their cost-efficiency. However, these organisations paid much higher prices for tents than many others, having a greater tendency to import goods.

Other organisations have had lower levels of cost-efficiency – most notably those with the staffing issues outlined above, operating in 'emergency relief' mode. These staffing issues are a direct result of inappropriate strategic focus or delivery, at a senior level.

Oxfam appears to have been the most extreme example in which the People in Aid code was contravened, with extremely difficult living and working conditions for Gujarat based field staff for the first three months of the response. Flooded camps and inadequate facilities also have a very direct impact on the efficiency of expensive expat staff.

There was significant debate within agencies about whether it was appropriate to fly expensively bought relief goods in to India on expensively chartered relief planes. In some organisations, notably Concern, field staff argued against this course of action, but were over-ridden by more senior managers. Relief flights create profile for organisations in what is perceived to be a competitive fund-raising environment. There is always speculation that they may be used as a way of 'being seen to do something' rather than as the most effective way of meeting the needs of beneficiaries.

Agencies have claimed very different levels of UK management support costs. The highest was Tearfund, with total UK support costs of £90k. This is by no means necessarily excessive for a £2m programme (Tearfund used DEC funds to contribute to a larger programme). The lowest was Oxfam which claimed only £16k in UK support costs. This appears to be significantly lower than the actual UK support costs incurred. Others varied within the £30k - £60k range. In some cases it is perfectly possible that support costs claimed from the DEC are greater than actual costs incurred.

It is notoriously difficult to compare support costs between organisations and programmes. Different agencies operate in different ways, and classify different costs as 'support'. A simple percentage of 'support' compared to 'programme' costs is at best meaningless and at worst downright misleading. It would be useful for the DEC to provide central guidance on the UK management and support costs that they expect to fund.

Finding five:
Financial administration and control has been of a robust professional standard in both member agencies and NGO partners.

3.5.1 Evidence

1. Qualified accounting staff have been employed in the vast majority of field offices. (This includes DEC member agencies' offices, and the offices of their local partners.)
2. Basic accounting records, including receipts, vouchers and supporting documents, have been filed in good order and entered into cashbooks.
3. Practical day to day procedures have been implemented, covering basic financial administration and controls such as: authorising payments, paying salaries, handling staff floats and accounting for fixed assets.
4. In almost all cases, DEC member agencies have developed or followed written financial procedures. Many member agencies had financial procedures for field offices already prepared, which were then brought into force in new or expanded field offices.
5. All DEC member agencies that were registered in India used bank accounts in the organisation's name. Funds were transferred from bank to bank. However, at times funds passed through three or four bank accounts on the way from the DEC to an organisation's field office.
6. Several DEC member agencies (including BRCS, Concern and Merlin) have found it difficult or impossible to open a bank account. NGOs cannot open an organisational account

until they are registered with the Indian government. Even then, opening the account can be a bureaucratic and time-consuming business. These agencies have aimed to make as many payments as possible direct from their head offices (including grants to partners and contractors' fees). This has limited the amount of money passing through their field office either as cash or in personal bank accounts. However, it raises some legal queries around India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act rules.

7. Where large sums of cash have been held in field offices, reasonably tight controls have been implemented. As ever, DEC member agencies have relied heavily on individual field managers. No cash losses were reported. This was recognised as a short term solution, and the DEC member agencies involved were taking active steps to resolve the situation.
8. DEC member agencies had a clear, up to date understanding of what money they had received from which source, and what it could be used for. In most cases, this information was held in a 'funding grid', which reconciled income from individual grants to the overall budget. World Vision uses a particularly powerful Lotus Notes system to keep different parts of the global organisation informed about grants received for any programme.
9. Expenditure was coded to specific budget lines and donors. In most cases, this was done by the project managers (rather than the finance staff). This is good practice, greatly improving the accuracy of coding, as it is done by people who have a really close understanding of the project and donors.
10. A wide range of computer systems has been used. World Vision use the large, organisation-wide package Sun in their field office. Others use Excel spreadsheets, which are then fed into organisational software. However, all systems were able to provide appropriate analysis, showing income and costs split by budget line and by donor.
11. Almost all DEC member agencies prepared monthly budget monitoring reports, containing information that was sufficiently accurate and timely to be useful to project managers. Most member agencies prepared these reports in the field. However, Merlin successfully sent cashbook information to a Regional Finance Officer based in Moscow, who passed financial information on to head office, and management information back to the field. Concern had more difficulty in preparing management information at long range, with only irregular information available in the field. This appears to have been due to a lack of time on the part of supporting finance staff in Ireland.
12. There was some variation in the number of finance staff supporting operations in head offices and in the field. In the field, World Vision employed four finance staff for their rehabilitation programme (spending £8m over two years: an average annual spend of £4m). Save the Children employed two finance staff for their programme (spending £5m over eighteen months: an average annual spend of £3.3m).
13. In the UK, the BRCS spends £60m overseas a year, through 8 desks. Each desk has its own support staff, including at least 50% of one person's time on financial issues. In addition, there is an International Finance Team of three accountants, which exists only to provide management support to the desks (not to process transactions or field returns). The desk covering India monitors seven countries, with the BRCS working in only four of these. It is very rare that the BRCS is involved in managing operations directly. Financial management is seen as a core desk function, receiving strong management emphasis and support. The financial situation of field projects is monitored in detail by the UK office.
14. In contrast, Oxfam's humanitarian department spent approximately £45m overseas in 2000, through 5 area teams. The Asia team provides advice and funding to a stretch of the world

from Afghanistan to the Philippines, including approximately ten countries, including four in which major disasters have occurred in the last year, one of which was the Gujarat earthquake. All projects they support involve some degree (normally a high degree) of direct intervention by Oxfam, directly managed through a regional structure. Area teams have their own support staff, including administrators who spend some of their time on financial issues. However, no dedicated finance team provides support to the area teams. One accountant from outside the humanitarian department provides financial support to the Asia team, for approximately 20% of his time. He has other main responsibilities. The financial situation of field projects is not monitored in detail by the UK office.

15. DEC member agencies made wide-ranging use of internal and external audit. For example, Concern's field office underwent a detailed internal audit in September 2001. Other agencies sent finance staff to audit and support field teams. In some member agencies, these visits included an informal internal audit.

3.5.2 Context

- All NGOs based in India which receive funds from outside the country have to be registered with the government, and have to undergo an annual external audit. This applies to Indian NGOs and to the local offices of international NGOs. Audits regularly check every voucher entered in an NGO's books, and are taken very seriously. There are very many Indian audit firms working to a high degree of professional practice in Gujarat.
- There appears to be a high level of expected professional practice in the community of Indian NGOs, employing qualified accountants, maintaining original receipts and vouchers in good order and implementing strong basic financial controls.
- Some DEC member agencies commented that it was difficult to recruit Indian accounting staff in Gujarat.

3.5.3 Impact

Funds have been carefully controlled in the field. The risks of misuse and misappropriation of funds have been minimised effectively. Just as importantly, appropriate support has been provided to programme staff. Financial reports have been prepared with a high degree of accuracy, supported by well maintained financial records.

3.5.4 Comment

The quality of financial administration and control is impressive, given the pressure to act quickly, the distance from head office and the bureaucratic weight of some DEC member agencies. In these circumstances, it is not easy to strike a balance between effective control and support for field programmes.

The most important first step in achieving this is to employ appropriately qualified financial staff: trained accountants. DEC member agencies have included good finance staff in field teams right from the beginning of their operations. When necessary, organisations setting up new offices for this response made appropriate use of expat accountants.

The organisations which employed fewer financial staff (either in their head office, or in India) found it more difficult to provide support to decision makers. NGOs rightly strive to keep their administration and management costs to a minimum. However, they have an equal responsibility to provide managers with the support they need to implement effective programmes.

Procedures manuals varied greatly. Some were relatively informal, around ten pages long. Others were hundreds of pages long. Some appeared to be more focused on the needs of head office, rather than the needs of the field office.

Different DEC member agencies had very different internal audit capacities. Some were able to audit all their partners, as well as their field offices (see finding six). Others did not have nearly such wide-ranging audit programmes. It did not appear that any of the audits that had been carried out by DEC member agencies were excessive.

Finding six:
NGO partners have maintained professional levels of financial administration, control and accountability.

3.6.1 Evidence

1. Collaboration between DEC member agencies and local partner NGOs has been formalised using signed agreements. Agreements have specified the roles and responsibilities of each party, and have also included budgets. They have been signed on legally binding forms. Responsibilities often included detailed reporting and control requirements. The majority of agreements were signed before project implementation began.
2. Field staff from DEC member agencies have engaged with the financial aspects of their roles. They have seen the project budget as a key management tool for partnership, not an ancillary distraction.
3. Partners appear to have maintained high levels of basic financial administration and control. In particular, vouchers have been well maintained, and accurate financial reports prepared for funding DEC member agencies.
4. Some DEC member agencies assessed their partners' financial management capacity before entering into partnership. In addition, capacity building support was provided. ActionAid's internal audit team has visited each of their partners twice since July 2001: once to check systems and make specific recommendations for improvement, and a second time to check vouchers. ActionAid's partnership agreement stipulated that partners had to undergo an ActionAid internal. Concern was also notable in having a structured financial management assessment procedure for partners, supported by subsequent internal audit visits.
5. Many partners underwent an external audit at the end of each distinct project. This allowed project reports to be verified by the external auditor before they were submitted to donors. This appeared to be recognised as established good practice, despite the intrusion and disruption of frequent audits.
6. Inevitably, given the number of partners and volume of funds, some irregularities occurred. Some have been detected and acted on. It is likely that the detection is a greater indicator of systematic good practice than the irregularity is an indicator of systematic bad practice. For

instance, Oxfam detected irregularities in a partner's accounts which were kept in Gujarati. No further grants were made to this partner. Concern has identified control weaknesses around the same issue with one of their partners, and is currently resolving them by employing a Gujarati-speaking (and reading) local accountant.

7. In a minority of cases the influx of funds may have led to a breakdown in the control environment within local partners, which made it difficult to meet administrative and reporting requirements. Save the Children had difficulties in this area with one of their major partners, which led to a cooling of the relationship in mid-implementation. The original partnership budget (for a total of £1.1m) was based on heavily inflated prices (a unit cost of 3,900 rupees for semi-permanent shelters, which subsequently came down by 33% to 2,625 rupees). This is likely to have contributed to the diminution of control, and may have been a direct result of negotiation in a high pressure environment, with imperfect information and limited understanding of the local context.

3.6.2 Context

- DEC member agencies have made wide-ranging use of local partners. All but one of the member agencies have undertaken the majority of their direct service provision through partner NGOs or local contractors. This is broadly recognised as the most effective approach to rehabilitation, in both the short and the long term.
- 'Local partners' is a simplifying term, covering a range of organisations. Different DEC member agencies formed partnerships with: local community groups (normally small), networks of community groups, and regional or national Indian charities (also known as trusts, they can be very large). Some member agencies had existing partners (maintained through their own strong local presence). Others were starting from scratch.
- Many local partners have been highly dedicated to delivering effective relief and rehabilitation. Some national Indian organisations have very robust infrastructures, and have been able to respond highly effectively and appropriately. This has included effective financial management both at the nuts and bolts level of financial administration and control, and at the strategic level. It is likely that they have performed more efficiently and effectively than some DEC member agencies.
- It is not clear to what extent member agencies were chasing partners. Certainly, those agencies which formed partnerships with effective local organisations achieved a great deal of impact. The number of high quality partner organisations must be limited.
- Some partner organisations grew enormously, due to the influx of funds in response to the earthquake. An extreme example is the estimate that Abhiyan, the widely respected network of NGOs in Gujarat, grew from having an annual turnover of 50m rupees (£0.75m) to over 800m rupees (£12m) over the course of this year.
- Partner organisations received funds from many different sources. In some instances, two or more DEC member agencies funded the same partner organisation.

3.6.3 Impact

The use of written, signed agreements (including budgets) ensures that DEC member agencies and their partners have a clear understanding of what they had both agreed to. This shared understanding has been crucial for successful project implementation.

The generally high level of financial administration, control and accountability among partners allows DEC member agencies confidence that funds have been used as agreed.

Overall, the financial management aspects of partnership appear to have run smoothly, supporting programme implementation effectively. Working through partners has been generally recognised as the most effective way of identifying and meeting local community needs, and of long term capacity building for Gujarati NGOs.

3.6.4 Comment

DEC member agencies relied heavily on partner organisations in the earthquake response. This created both opportunities and threats for the community of Indian NGOs working in Gujarat. The main opportunity was firmly grasped, and a great deal of high quality work was carried out in the short term.

Good financial practice was indicated by the willingness of partners to accept audits, and by the extent to which project staff were engaged with the financial aspects of working with partners. In the majority of cases, these pointed to a positive and open relationship.

There were also difficulties. The immediate environment did not create conditions encouraging financial discipline. There was a lot of money available, and great pressure to act quickly. There are anecdotal reports of partner organisations dropping funding offered from one source and taking it from another which imposed less onerous operating conditions.

This effect limits the excesses of over-blown reporting requirements. However, no evidence was found that DEC member agencies were setting unreasonably tight operating conditions. No converse correcting mechanism existed, tightening operating conditions when necessary.

DEC member agencies operating independently have found this issue difficult to resolve. Although they may take what they see to be a responsible approach to partnership, other funding entities take very different approaches. Common standards between agencies are very hard to develop in practice, particularly when they work with such varied conceptions of what ‘partnership’ means.

DEC mechanisms seem to be based on the assumption that programmes are implemented by operational, UK based NGOs. For instance, the budget format is based on DfID’s format for emergency humanitarian intervention. With its categories for ‘supplies and materials’, it is not appropriate for rehabilitation activity implemented by partners. This increased the administrative burden in implementing partners and funding member agencies.

More substantially, large partners were not involved in the DEC’s initial appeal-launching conference call, or in field level co-ordination meetings. This appears to have been a missed opportunity, given the results of the wide ranging difficulty of DEC member agencies to get to grips with the local context.

Finding seven:
NGOs have been accountable to the DEC for the funds they have received. Some have also given financial account to beneficiaries.

3.7.1 Evidence

1. DEC member agencies use a variety of systems to track income from donor to expenditure. In all cases, DEC funds have been clearly marked using a 'DEC' or 'Gujarat programme' code when they have been received. This has allowed DEC member agencies to monitor the amount of DEC funding that they have received for use on the Gujarat earthquake response. (This is generally part of a wider system, monitoring the receipt and use of restricted funds within member agencies.)
2. DEC member agencies have provided financial reports to the DEC secretariat as requested. Reports have been accurate (allbeit sometimes a few weeks late) and supported by robust financial records (see finding five).
3. Expenditure is generally allocated to specific donors in the field (see finding five). In most cases, this was done by the cost-incurring project staff, rather than finance staff. This is good practice. It ensures an accurate match between the purposes for which funds were donated, and what they were spent on. In the case of the DEC, funds were provided for unrestricted activities within the earthquake response. So, the detailed mechanism of allocating specific field costs to funders has had no impact on accountability.
4. Reports of expenditure have been reconciled to statements of income (from all different income sources), more usually in head office than in the field. In addition, financial reports for donors have been reconciled to internal financial reports for managers.
5. Some DEC member agencies provided financial and narrative reports which described their total programme, which included the use of significant funds from other sources. These did not always specify exactly how DEC funds had been used within the overall programme.
6. Some DEC member agencies (and their partners) have worked with a high level of community participation. This has involved beneficiaries in resource allocation, allowing them to discuss different options, which creates direct accountability. For instance, VHAI discussed the design of a community centre with the beneficiary community. This allowed beneficiaries to influence how scarce resources would be used. By providing information about costs, beneficiaries knew what decisions were being made on their behalf.
7. ActionAid have also been active in developing ways of giving financial account to beneficiaries. They have encouraged their partners to display financial statements in community centres. They have also published financial statements in the local press. The ActionAid team described that a necessary precursor to expecting partners to do this was for the ActionAid office in Ghandidham to share its financial statements with partners.

3.7.2 Context

- All DEC member agencies are required by UK charity law to monitor and report on restricted funds separately. This guarantees a measure of accountability to donors, which should allow them to see how their funds have been used.
- Almost all donors insist that grant receiving organisations submit some type of financial and narrative report, explaining how funds have been used.

- Principle nine of the Red Cross Code of Conduct states that "We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources".
- DEC member agencies and their partners received funding from many different sources.

3.7.3 Impact

DEC member agencies can track DEC donations through to expenditure. They provide accurate and timely financial statements to the DEC secretariat.

Very few DEC member agencies have made any meaningful attempt to hold themselves financially accountable to those they seek to assist. This contravenes Principle Nine of the Red Cross Code of Conduct.

3.7.4 Comment

DEC member agencies take their responsibility to account to donors for the use of funds very seriously. Significant staff time is invested in this, and a high level of accountability to donors is achieved. Internal managers are the only other stakeholder group to whom account is regularly given for the use of available funds.

The use of general reports for programmes which have received more than just DEC funding provides a limited level of accountability to the DEC. For instance, if £10k is contributed to a £100k temporary shelter project, then an overall report may not specify what the £10k has been used for. It could have been used to buy half of all tents bought, or wholly for administrative costs. But, this approach significantly reduces the administrative burden for implementing agencies. It would be useful for the DEC to consider whether this level of accountability is acceptable.

ActionAid appears to lead the way in developing and using organisation-wide tools for large international NGOs to give account to beneficiaries. Community focused tools have been used in Gujarat, which empower beneficiaries to understand and potentially influence how ActionAid behaves. No other agency used any mechanism similar to this.

Grass-roots level community participation (when achieved) has also created immediate financial accountability to beneficiaries. However, NGOs continue to act in the name of beneficiaries while programme-wide accountability to beneficiaries remains rare.

Finding eight:
Members and NGO partners have involved programme managers in financial management. (It has not been 'left to the accountant'.)

3.8.1 Evidence

1. Interviews with finance and programme staff suggested that by and large, programme staff have taken an active interest in financial issues.
2. There have been regular meetings between finance and programme staff. Some member agencies had weekly scheduled meetings, others fortnightly or monthly. However, in almost all cases finance staff in the field were available to provide immediate analysis and support for managers. Finance staff were normally members of the senior field-level management team.
3. Some member agencies have taken a forward looking and management-focused approach to financial support, rather than a cost counting and control approach. For instance, some agencies developed detailed cashflow and cost-to-completion models, forecasting how much they would have to spend to complete the project. Regularly updated (once a month) this is a powerful tool, supporting field managers. At times these were ad hoc. But they helped managers to plan ahead, and demonstrated a level of engagement between finance and programme staff.

3.8.2 Context

- Robust financial information has been produced, which programme staff have been able to rely on. This is a necessary condition for programme staff's engagement.
- By and large programme staff have some financial skills/training. The majority of DEC member agencies described recruitment procedures for field managers that included a financial test. However, staff in several member agencies expressed a wish for more financial training.
- Different member agencies provided different levels of financial management support to key decision makers in the field and in the UK. (See finding five.)

3.8.3 Impact and comment

Financial management across the programme has been greatly strengthened by the involvement of programme staff. They have known how much they have available, and what it can be spent on. Without engagement at this level, resources cannot be matched to activities and control often suffers.

As in any sector, it is not always easy to involve programme staff in financial management. The extent to which DEC member agencies were able to achieve this demonstrates how widely it is accepted and implemented as good practice.

However, finance staff do not appear to have been much involved in programme decisions. If they had been, then greater emphasis might have been put on cost-effectiveness in strategising (see finding three).

Finding nine:
Field and head office staff of member agencies have not always understood the DEC's role and operating procedures.

3.9.1 Evidence

1. There was significant confusion among DEC member agencies about DEC procedures, including why information was requested, what format it should be sent in, and whether funds were available in advance or in arrears.
2. Some agencies perceived that the DEC had to approve project plans, budgets and budget revisions. Others assumed that the DEC had no influence on budget changes.
3. A large proportion of DEC member agencies expressed a wish for clearer formats for project plans and reports.
4. The extension of the time period, and use of the fund closing mechanism created some confusion among member agencies, particularly as these mechanisms remained uncertain until almost six months after the earthquake.
5. The Indicator of Capacity mechanism was not used to split the additional £1.5m of pooled funds received between April and July 2001.

3.9.2 Context

- Some organisations have a long chain stretching from the DEC Central Contact to the field. For instance, Help the Aged is the member of the DEC, which passes funds and information to Help Age International (based in the UK), which passes them on to Help Age India (in Delhi), which pass them on to the field office. This involves three separate entities and two continents. In addition, some member agencies have their own internal communications issues. It is not surprising that the clarity of message can suffer.
- The DEC is unique among fund disbursing bodies. But hands-on staff in the UK and in the field generally see it in the same light as other institutional donors.
- A small proportion of partners had worked with DEC funding before (in Orissa). But most did not understand how the DEC raises funds and differs from institutional donors. Occasionally, this was perceived as undermining a sense of partnership, as it was not obvious what the DEC's goals were.
- Many UK staff from DEC member agencies mentioned that they valued the accessibility of the DEC.
- Funds are received by the DEC through many different routes, including through banks, post offices, member agencies and directly. The DEC and member agencies both receive a mixture of pooled funds and retained funds. These funds have to be re-distributed between collecting organisations. This is complicated, and makes it difficult to track total pooled income.

3.9.3 Impact

Procedural niggles added to the much more serious frustration caused by the nine month time limit.

Different member agencies have different operating arrangements with the DEC, receiving funding at different points in relation to projects, and negotiating time extensions.

In Gujarat, 'DEC agency' has become a tag for the group of member agencies, separate from any real acknowledgement of what the DEC is. 'DEC co-ordination meetings' cover a wider range of issues than those related to DEC funding. These meetings are set to continue beyond the nine month period, when the use of the name may create additional confusion as to the role of the DEC.

3.9.4 Comment

This is a relatively minor point. Many staff in member agencies appreciate the informality and accessibility of the DEC secretariat – "just being able to pick up the phone" to talk to secretariat staff. However, the confusion among field staff (and some UK staff) appears to be avoidable.

One result of this informality is that personal relationships between staff and the secretariat can appear to have a big influence on the organisational relationship between a member agency and the secretariat. This is likely to have contributed to different agencies having different perceptions of DEC mechanisms.

It is not clear whether this confusion is due to unclear communications from the DEC to member agencies, or unclear communications within member agencies. It would be useful for the DEC to clarify the responsibilities of Central Contacts, alongside the on-going work on operating procedures.

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DEC Evaluation: The earthquake in Gujarat

VOLUME THREE
Sector Reports

Report Four

Review against Sphere Standards

Hugh Goyder, *Humanitarian Initiatives*

Introduction

The first part of this section of the evaluation reviews the extent to which DEC members and their local partners were aware of and felt able to adhere to Sphere Standards in the implementation of their programmes. The second part reviews the overall appropriateness of the Sphere Standards in Gujarat case and their use for the evaluation of emergency responses. The intention is both to inform future evaluations and contribute to planned revisions of the existing Sphere handbook.

The methodology used incorporated the following components. First agencies were requested to undertake their own self-evaluation against both Sphere and the Red Cross Code. Four agencies submitted a written assessment and DEC members also undertook a collective self-evaluation at a meeting in September 2001, on which this report draws extensively. These self-assessments were supplemented by further discussions in the field both individually and collectively with DEC agencies, including a meeting with Sphere consultants and "pilot" Sphere agencies hosted by DMI in Ahmedabad. . The purpose of this section is to provide an overall picture of the extent to which Sphere Standards have been adhered to and the constraints faced by DEC members in trying to adhere to them. Sphere Standards relating to nutrition and food aid were not relevant to this emergency, and this section therefore focuses on Sphere Standards in relation to water supply, sanitation, and shelter.

Section One: Adherence to Sphere Standards

1.1 Generic issues in relation to Sphere Standards

Discussions on the first draft of this section with DEC members and Sphere project staff showed up some of the difficulties of securing a common interpretation of Sphere across a large number of diverse agencies. The most common misunderstanding is between overall Sphere Standards and the more precise *indicators*. A second area of potential misunderstanding is a tendency to see Sphere as a "project" separate from other related international initiatives, specifically the Humanitarian Charter, even though both the Sphere Handbook and the training undertaken by the Sphere Project emphasize these linkages.

The intention of this section is simply to record and report the perceptions of Sphere held by DEC agencies working in Gujarat: where these perceptions differ from the intentions of the Sphere Project Team they may suggest issues which need to be covered in future Sphere training programmes and other dissemination activities: the important distinction between Sphere Standards and *indicators* seems to be one important area where more clarification is needed.

1.2 Assessment.

In every sector Sphere Standards emphasise the importance of the initial assessment. In evaluating actual performance against Sphere one should ideally have access to agencies' initial assessments in order to understand the initial assumptions made, and the actions implemented in order to better "track" how these interventions then worked out. However previous DEC evaluations have raised questions about the quality of agencies' assessments, and the Sphere Project's own implementation team has identified assessments as a problematic area[2]

We found it very difficult to track down original assessment documentation, despite repeated requests, so it is difficult to know the extent to which DEC members' assessments were consistent with Sphere Guidelines. Given the amounts of money being called forward by DEC members this relative dearth of assessment reports is an issue of some concern. For instance, when reporting on their assessment SCF said in their self evaluation that "*findings and recommendations were, however, not compiled in one single written report but fed into the planning process orally and through trip reports largely due to time constraint".* Internal documentation shared by some DEC members in the UK suggests that some agencies also had to make initial funding decisions on the basis of very little information.

There is clearly a trade-off between spending time making highly detailed assessments, and making a quick response. Even so our own findings support the view that *"In many funding proposals prepared by humanitarian agencies levels of information about the context in which assistance is to be delivered can be low. In effect these proposals represent an agency "offer" rather than a real analysis of the problem at hand – the local needs, the constraints on humanitarian action, and the local capacities available"*[3].

In general the initial documentation that agencies submit to the DEC describes the immediate effects of the earthquake, and then moves to stating what the agency concerned plans to do in response. What is often omitted is a realistic assessment of the agency's own capacity and especially the limitations to this capacity. In the case of the Gujarat Earthquake it would have been especially useful if DEC members had outlined in their initial assessments what had **not** been damaged by the Earthquake and which therefore presented good opportunities for rapid relief and recovery – especially the very limited damage to local transport links, and local agriculture, a strong government system at all levels, and a huge diversity of local NGOs and other civil society organizations.

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[2] See J. Neves & M.Brown *Lessons learned through the process of piloting of the Humanitarian Charter & Minimum Standards* (Oct 2000). Available on www.sphereproject.org

[3] Grunewald, Pirotte and de Geoffroy in *Humanitarian Exchange: Issue 19,* September 2001.

Once news of a sudden impact disaster like an earthquake or a cyclone reaches both DEC members and DFID's Emergency Response Team a well-oiled response mechanism swings into action. While the Sphere Minimum Standards (p.9) state that '*our fundamental accountability must be to those we seek to assist'* it is clear that at this stage agencies' actions are not only driven by the presumed needs on the ground but also by organizational, public relations, and financial imperatives. DEC members would argue in return that they have to be seen to be responding to any major and well-reported emergency, and that a prompt response is more in the interest of beneficiaries than a delayed response. However the imperatives mentioned above tend to lead those agencies which sent in staff from the UK to underestimate the likely response to the earthquake both of the State government, local NGOs, and civil society more generally, and the ability of the local market to meet initial supplies needs. In the early reports from agencies from the Earthquake area there is a presumption in favour of intervention, followed by a request for funds, supplies, and equipment.

Once their teams were in place most DEC agencies conducted detailed assessments using participatory methods, and these assessments covered both issues of village selection, and the major priorities within each village in relation to issues like drinking water, animal husbandry, opportunities for labour, and the availability of food. Participatory Appraisal (PRA) techniques were widely used. The problem reported by many agencies was that after going through such a relatively laborious assessment process other NGOs or Government agencies could arrive in the same villages and start relief or rehabilitation activities on the basis of a far more sketchy assessment.

1.3 Training and DEC members' awareness of Sphere Standards

Even where Sphere Standards were clearly relevant, they lacked a clear "champion". Firstly senior staff felt under strong time pressures, as discussed below and in other sections of this evaluation. Secondly any training in Sphere standards seems to have been something of an afterthought. As the Oxfam self-evaluation notes: "*an introduction to the Sphere standards and the ICRC Codes should be given at the beginning of a program.*" Such training was especially important as so much implementation work was carried out by local NGOs and in some cases (eg ActionAid) by volunteers. Many DEC members tried to organize training for their local NGO partners, but in general with so many NGOs involved it was very difficult for them to insist that Sphere Standards should be adhered to. Local NGOs were often dealing with more than one INGO, and in spite of the best efforts of DEC agencies, there are still no agreed standards that are actually followed by all international agencies, let alone local NGOs, especially when there is an overall surplus of funding. The training in Sphere Standards being offered now both by DMI and some DEC members individually in Gujarat will mainly help inform the response to future emergencies.

The internal evaluations shared with the DEC evaluation team show the challenge of making staff aware of Sphere Standards (and indicators) at every stage of a relief operation, especially when staff turnover is high and there is great pressure to get new staff mobilised quickly. The Oxfam evaluation notes that while some staff members used Sphere in their assessments, in general '*use of Sphere standards seems to have been sporadic, with the principal variable being the prior knowledge and interest of individual staff members'*.

1.4 Human Resources

In all sectors a key Sphere Standard is that *"interventions are implemented by staff who have appropriate qualifications and experience for the duties involved, and who are adequately managed and supported"*. This issue was hardly referred to at all in the self-evaluations by DEC members or at their own meeting to discuss Sphere Standards, perhaps because it is relatively sensitive. The People in Aid Code goes into far greater detail than does Sphere in respect to how staff managing emergencies should be managed and supported, and a number of issues related to human resources management are covered elsewhere in this evaluation. Three issues must be highlighted here. First DEC agencies varied widely in the kind of previous experience their senior staff brought to the Earthquake response. Many agencies employed a mix of expatriate staff familiar with emergencies elsewhere and local staff with a strong understanding of the local context and development work, but perhaps less experience of emergencies. Whether this combination worked depended on the both the management ability and length of service of the Programme Coordinator concerned, but in general the higher the turnover of staff at senior levels, the harder it was for DEC agencies to observe either Sphere Standards or the People in Aid Code.

Secondly there were major problems in the amount of management support offered to field staff not just in those DEC members new to India (Concern and Merlin) but also in Oxfam, which based their Programme Coordinator in Ahmedabad, over 6 hours' drive from Bhuj.

Thirdly there was a wide variation in the quality of logistical support and accommodation offered by DEC agencies. While most agencies offered adequate accommodation for their teams, Oxfam's compound at Lakadia, (described in detail in their own evaluation) was totally inadequate and clearly in breach both of Sphere Standards and the People in Aid Code.

1.5. Response Sectors

1.5.1.Water supply. Sphere Standards call for relatively demanding assessments in relation to water & sanitation, including an "*assessment…conducted in co-operation with a multi-sectoral team, local authorities, women and men from the affected population and humanitarian agencies"*…(Sphere p.21). The geographical context in which such an assessment is to be made is not specified: it might be possible to set up such an assessment in one town or a small number of villages, but it would have taken many weeks for such a detailed exercise to be completed for the whole area affected by the earthquake. More practically one would have hoped that DEC agencies might have documented whether or not the earthquake resulted in a major disruption of water supplies and hence whether there was an immediate threat to health and livelihoods. If so where were these problems most acute and how well placed were government authorities and municipalities to meet these needs?

While Oxfam's initial water programme was useful, their initial assessment underestimated the widespread local availability of such items as bottled water, buckets, soap, and water storage tanks. Whether or not supplies were procured locally or airlifted from the Europe by DEC agencies depended on the local knowledge of the logistics staff deployed. Those agencies deploying expatriates in the initial stages like Oxfam, SCF, and the Red Cross preferred to go for airlifts, while those like HelpAge India with a strong local procurement capacity were able to

procure all their supplies on the local market. The timing of supplies requests from some agencies shared with the evaluation team shows that normally these were made within 6 days after the Earthquake by staff new to India. Once it became more aware of the local capacity available, especially from the Gujarat State Government's Water Board (GWSSB), Oxfam quickly found that their role needed to shift away from the provision of equipment (much of it air-freighted) to monitoring the supply of water by government tankers to outlying villages (ref. March 2001 Monitoring report).

While DEC agencies were aware of the overall technical standards for water availability laid down by Sphere, they did not find Sphere indicators for water and sanitation really relevant. Since Kutch is a drought area, and lack of water a perennial issue, it was impossible for DEC members to achieve Sphere indicators in relation to water consumption, especially at the height of the dry season, and it might also have been inadvisable in that this might have resulted in people consuming more water in the long term than can be supplied. As the agencies said in their self evaluation:

'In many areas however, access to water (quality & quantity) does not meet Standards of Sphere. During the dry season many villages rely on sporadic delivery of tankered water. As this was the situation pre-earthquake addressing this issue was considered a development question and did not become a priority for intervention in the emergency phase……(Our) emergency responses focused on repair and rehabilitation of existing water supplies, not development of new systems. Therefore, the flow rates, quality of water etc were limited by the previous functioning of the repaired water system. In areas where agencies were working people received a minimum of 15 litres per person per day and …around the maximum of 250 persons per outlet.'

The State Water Authority, the GWSSB, is a relatively competent agency and (following the earthquake) became well-resourced. Oxfam was right to see the GWSSB as critical to any response in this sector, but (as argued in the first part of this evaluation) it tended to underestimate the GWSSB's capacity to mobilise emergency water tanks and tanker distribution systems in response to the earthquake.

1.5.2. Drainage. *The key indicator for Sphere on drainage is that* there is no standing wastewater around water points or elsewhere in the settlement. *Even at the start of the dry season, 9 months after the earthquake, drainage in most sites where DEC agencies had assisted with water supplies was still poor, and the resulting stagnant and dirty water was a potential health hazard. DEC members feel that* "Inadequate attention was paid to this issue in the planning stage of water source development." *This weakness also reflects a lack of long-term engagement with the community at the time when these works were designed. One example of good practice was implemented by CARE's partner NGO Cohesion which spent very small amounts of money on vegetable seeds and has used waste water for individual vegetable plots.*

1.5.3. Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion. This is an area where adherence to Sphere Standards may be leading some DEC agencies into difficulties. While Sphere Standards do not explicitly require the use of toilets, they do stress the need for hygiene promotion. Oxfam was sufficiently concerned about existing (pre-earthquake) practices of water collection that they decided to airlift buckets on the assumption that these would be more hygienic than the water containers

normally used in Gujarat. SCF also supplied buckets, jerry cans, and plastic tanks but they found that people were reluctant to use them. As the self-evaluation by DEC members concluded, "*water storage containers distributed by some agencies (buckets & jerrycans) were found to be inappropriate and unacceptable to the local population. There was probably inadequate community consultation before purchase of items."*

Also too much soap was provided, to the extent that one respondent in our beneficiary survey thought that the DEC agency (Oxfam) distributing soap must be some kind of soap company! This was an example of where greater information exchange between agencies would have prevented mistakes, as some agencies distributed soap in hygiene kits, whilst others did not consider it a priority as they knew that communities had alternative access to soap.

The earthquake took place in the dry winter season. The major initial sanitation problems were in the towns (where few DEC agencies or their partners worked.) In the rural areas many people are not accustomed to latrines: settlements are often small and scattered; the soil is sandy and rarely intensively cultivated, while water is scarce. While latrines may be popular (to an extent) with women, they are a lower priority for men. This was therefore a sector in which Sphere standards in relation to sanitation may appear to conflict with article 5 of the Red Cross Code, which commits agencies to "respect culture and custom". The perception of the local NGO Abhiyan is that too many international agencies arrived with a preset agenda in relation to sanitation, and that this agenda contained conflicting objectives: on the one hand they wanted to take some immediate actions to reduce the risk of faecal contamination and the spread of water-borne diseases, while on the other they were trying, as the DEC agencies put it to "*very quickly change a lifetime of beliefs and practices whilst operating in a complex environment with many conflicting influences"*.

The result was that, in order to comply with at least their own interpretation of Sphere Standards, considerable time and DEC resources have been wasted on the unsuccessful promotion of latrines. As our shelter report (Appendix 5) indicates, in theory it would be desirable to include latrines where possible in new designs for individual houses or whole communities. However considerable long-term investment in health promotion will also be needed to ensure that the latrines included in some of the DEC-funded housing schemes will ever be used, and to prevent them becoming a health hazard in themselves. Few lessons seem to have been learned from the Orissa Cyclone, where Oxfam also ran into difficulties trying to implement a large sanitation programme.

1.5.4. Rubbish disposal. Given the amount of debris and rubbish resulting from the earthquake Sphere Standards on this issue were relevant, but this was also an area in which agencies found some difficulties. Once again this problem was most acute in the towns, but agencies found that even when equipment like wheelbarrows, tools, and rubbish skips had been supplied, it was still difficult to get municipalities and communities to move rubbish. But there is little evidence that rubbish has presented more of a health hazard since the earthquake than it did before it, and this Sphere Standard is one of many which appears culturally specific.

1.5.5. Shelter and Site Planning. Even though the need for people's participation in assessments is emphasized in the Sphere Standards the opinion survey (Appendix 4) found that people in general, and women in particular, did not feel they had been given much opportunity to participate in agencies' assessments in relation to shelter materials and shelter. This same survey also found that people need to be given better information by agencies about the options open to them, especially in relation to shelter.

Tents were initially in high demand, and some were still in use 9 months after the earthquake, but they gave little protection in the intense summer heat and perished quickly. DEC agencies reported in their collective self-evaluation that "*there were discrepancies in the numbers of blankets allocated to each family. Quality also varied, and there are some reports of adults receiving child sized blankets."* Initially too much clothing was distributed and much was found to be too urban and "westernized" for a rural population. In relation to polyethylene sheeting, there were some reports of the sheeting supplied being of lower quality or smaller dimensions than that specified by UNHCR and endorsed by Sphere. This is certainly a key item in which for future disasters in India it would be desirable to achieve some greater standardization using the recommended UN/Sphere dimensions.

In the provision of both temporary and long-term shelter NGOs have been playing only a minor role compared to that of the Government and UN system. It was not therefore really practical for DEC agencies to insist on adherence to Sphere indicators in this sector. Given the widespread damage, and people's reluctance to move far from their homes, the Sphere key indicator of 3.5 to 4.5 sq. metres per person appears too high in the Indian context. As DEC members said:

"The minimum house size is difficult to achieve, particularly for those with larger families. The cost becomes an issue as agencies would generally like to help more families with a smaller but adequate house, rather than fewer families with elaborate houses. There is also an issue of land ownership and plot size as in some cases the Sphere recommended house size exceeds the plot size available to the family."

There is a further issue in relation to the provision of temporary shelter, where DEC members found people valued security of assets, and proximity to their old homes, more than having a particular quota of space available. In reality the provision of temporary shelter requires a series of compromises between quality, quantity, and different sorts of materials. It would be useful if future Sphere guidelines could discuss more explicitly the difficult choices that agencies involved in shelter activities have to make, often with very limited time and technical knowledge.

1.6. Participation.

As the section on shelter makes clear DEC agencies found it difficult to implement the Sphere Standard that '*the disaster-affected population has the opportunity to participate in the design & implementation of the assistance programme'*. Temporary shelter was a difficult area, with people giving a higher priority than agencies to issues of security, both of property and of family members (ref March monitoring report). In both temporary and permanent shelter there were many instances where DEC members did find ways of getting greater community involvement, for instance CARE's mason training programme, but in general DEC agencies felt they were

working under a severe time pressure for at least 3 reasons: First, at least in Kutch District they feared that if they did not show results quickly then other agencies would take their place. Secondly they felt a pressure to finalise temporary shelter before the monsoon, and finally most but not all DEC members were striving to maintain disbursement rates so that they could stay within the DEC 9-month expenditure period. In addition uncertainties about government plans in relation to village adoption, and difficulties in obtaining both the necessary government permissions, and government compensation meant that agencies taking on construction work have become more focused on these issues than on community participation (ref. Appendix 5).

DEC agencies in their self-evaluation have agreed that these different pressures have meant that participation by beneficiaries in the shelter programme has been below Sphere guidelines, and here have been too few opportunities for families to have any strong input into the designs of their permanent houses even though DEC members agreed this would have been desirable. This is especially disappointing given the previous involvement of many DEC agencies in the shelter programme following the last major Indian earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra and the lessons that should have been learned from that operation.

Section Two: Appropriateness of Sphere Standards

2.1. Relief and rehabilitation

A key characteristic of the earthquake response was that the relief period was relatively brief. Roads, railways, electricity supplies and the different levels of local government were soon restored to normal, and there was no reported malnutrition or disease outbreaks as a result of the earthquake. This was very different from the Orissa cyclone and related tidal wave which left many communities cut off by standing water and damaged roads for weeks. This meant that from an early stage most DEC agencies were focusing on reconstruction. In fact less DEC funds were used for this immediate relief stage than might have been expected: Action Aid decided not to do relief work at all, Merlin focused on the reconstruction of health facilities, and Oxfam initially spent DFID funds and only started spending DEC funding in April. Most Sphere Standards apply more to the provision of relief assistance than they do to reconstruction, and it would be useful if there could be greater clarity about the extent to which they can be applied to rehabilitation.

2.2 Relevance of Sphere

In their self-evaluation DEC members found 3 overall problems in relation to the application of Sphere Standards in the Gujarat context:[4]

1. *The Standards imply that communities have no resources or capacities to contribute, and that aid agencies have a responsibility to entirely meet all the needs of beneficiaries.*

2. *Sphere Standards do not reflect differing circumstances of emergency/disaster, differing norms in different countries, or adequately reflect cultural differences (eg. issue of Sanitation).*

[4] All these points have been shared with Sphere Project Staff who feel that they are based on misunderstandings about Sphere "standards" both by international agencies and their partners in India.

3. *Lack of Local Ownership- The legitimacy of insisting on the use of Sphere Standards with partner agencies was also questioned. Partners were not involved in the development of standards, and may not subscribe to the standards for the local context, considering them inappropriate, unrealistic or unachievable*.

DEC members concluded that Sphere Standards were really more applicable for Complex Emergencies, normally conflict-related, where people are displaced persons and need relief aid over a longer period.

However if, as DEC members argue, '*Sphere Standards are sound principles and valuable guidelines to follow to ensure best practice…(but).. they are not wholly applicable and appropriate in all circumstances'*, then we do need to ask whether these standards are in fact general guidelines rather than minimum standards? The problem is that while the Red Cross Code represents a set of working principles, which can be applied more or less universally, Sphere Guidelines specify precise technical indicators which will always be context-specific.

2.3. Sphere and evaluation

Methodologically this evaluation has shown how hard it is to use Sphere Standards for evaluation without some kind of tighter monitoring of agencies' work throughout a relief operation – a point made also by Oxfam's own evaluation. This would require one to "accompany" DEC agencies in the field from the very start of their response and to try to "measure" the extent to which their relief efforts were consistent with Sphere Standards. Even so the "retrospective" and self-evaluation method followed in this evaluation has been useful as a learning exercise, and has probably helped increase awareness of the standards themselves amongst DEC members.

2.4. Government

One particular problem with Sphere in the context of Gujarat is that the Minimum Standards do not appear to give sufficient importance to the role of Government both in relief and reconstruction, to the extent that some DEC agencies in Gujarat felt that the guidelines applied more to "failed states" where government was weak or non-existent rather than India. While the Government of India is interested in Sphere Standards and has asked for training, the Gujarat State Government, which has been very active both in relief and reconstruction, is unaware of the Sphere Standards, and this poses particular problems where NGOs aware of Sphere are implementing projects jointly with the Government.

2.5 Conclusions

This evaluation suggests that observance of Sphere Standards is a necessary, but in no way a sufficient, condition for an effective response to a humanitarian emergency. While following Sphere Standards undoubtedly results in an improved technical response by NGOs it does not necessarily assist their performance in a number of other key respects covered elsewhere in this evaluation, and our conclusion is that there is a poor correlation between observance of Sphere Standards and other key performance indicators – especially in relation to the impact, sustainability, and cost effectiveness of rehabilitation initiatives.

The views expressed by DEC members in Gujarat suggest, at the very least, a degree of ambivalence both within the member agencies and their Indian partner NGOs about the need for internationally agreed standards for humanitarian responses. This in turn shows the need both for DEC members and the major national NGOs to promote discussion both of the Humanitarian Charter and Sphere Standards in India long after the current reconstruction programmes in Gujarat have been completed.

2. 6 Recommendations

This study has shown that while there was good awareness of Sphere standards in many agencies, there are still wide differences in the way Sphere standards are interpreted. This suggests that the Sphere Project needs to do further work to help NGOs appreciate the differences between the overall Standards and the more specific indicators. There is also a need to help agencies to contextualize both the Standards and indicators for different sorts of emergencies and locations, and a related need for a more consistent understanding about when agencies need to use their discretion in interpreting these Standards. Thirdly assessment is currently agreed to be a problematic area, and future Sphere Guidelines should clarify standards for assessment: perhaps in the case of sudden impact disasters like earthquakes more distinction should be made between initial assessments and those completed one month or so later when far better information should be available.

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