

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation of the response by Tearfund's partner NGO, HEED, in response to the devastating cyclone, known as Cyclone Sidr, which struck Bangladesh on 15th November 2007. The evaluation focuses on that part of HEED's response which was funded by the DEC, which at £231,697 represented roughly one-third of HEED's total income for its Sidr response. Following the Cyclone HEED staff and volunteers helped around 10,000 people take shelter in HEED Cyclone shelters in nine locations in 5 different districts, and made two distributions of dry rations - the first one within a few days, the second within a month. Tarpaulins and basic building materials were distributed to a total of 1,050 families, and cash for work schemes introduced.

HEED responded rapidly to the cyclone, mobilising staff and making local purchases of food where possible. However due mainly to funding constraints its distributions were based more on the need to divide all the relief it could mobilise between all its identified beneficiaries than on any more objective assessment. The result was that HEED tried to cover too large an area (25 locations in 9 different districts) and its impact might have been greater had it been able to focus on a smaller area.

As regards Preparedness, even before the cyclone struck, HEED's field staff and volunteers worked very hard to get people to shelters, and saved many lives: the shelters themselves were fully used. However its Disaster Management Committees could have been even more effective had the earlier DRR project, funded by Tearfund Australia, been better managed, monitored, and resourced. As regards timeliness, the initial food distributions were prompt, but the amounts of food offered were too small, partly as Tearfund encouraged HEED to hold funding back for Cash for Work programmes. Given the relatively modest size of the DEC funds allocated to HEED, the disbursement of funds was too slow, partly due to delays by the NGO Affairs Bureau. These delays in turn were caused by HEED's initial decision to use about £38000 of the Appeal money as micro-credit, as this decision required the approval of this Bureau.

In relation to appropriateness the main findings, apart from the inadequate amounts of food offered per household, are that HEED contributed to temporary shelter through its supply of high quality tarpaulin, much of which is still in use even now. There is though still a long term deficit of permanent housing. Cash for Work was found to be both an appropriate and effective intervention, and resulted in the construction of about 40km of local roads, 3 km of embankments, and 3 ponds. HEED insisted on paying directly to laborers' groups and resisted pressure to pay its workers via the local middlemen who often seek to control this type of project. It is not entirely clear how well the assets created by CFW will be maintained.

The cash grants were appreciated, but as their amounts were small (about £38) they had to be supplemented with credit from HEED and other NGOs.. The grants were used for a wide variety of purposes – for example reviving small shops, buying nets, or small livestock. While most of the businesses funded were successful there was quite a high death toll amongst the goats people bought but this problem was not identified by HEED's own monitoring.

As regards the one Cyclone shelter built using DEC funds, the building itself has been completed rapidly and within a modest budget, but it would be little use as a shelter for large numbers of people given that it has only 4 toilets and, at present, no water supply. HEED needs to encourage the formation of a management committee which takes long term responsibility for running and maintaining this shelter. In response to future emergencies in Bangladesh there is a need for both HEED and Tearfund to have a clearer strategic view in relation to cyclone shelters, and to consider giving more priority to permanent housing, rather than cyclone shelters: from the community's perspective it would be helpful if the DEC could agree a longer time period for the recovery phase to any future Cyclone or Flood Appeal in Bangladesh, so that more DEC funds can be used for permanent shelter. If HEED continues to work on DRR in coastal areas, it should prepare evacuation plans with the communities which do not only rely on shelters but also make the maximum use of other strong buildings with a strong roof or more than one storey.

The tarpaulins distributed were of good quality and encouraged a general expectation amongst field staff and communities that HEED's donors would cover permanent housing and provide housing of the same quality as the tarpaulin.

In relation to accountability to beneficiaries HEED was far more responsive to the idea than many other NGOs in Bangladesh, and did introduce notice boards at every site describing the work being supported: this innovation was widely appreciated.

Complaints boxes were introduced but their purpose was not clear to people, and general meetings were found to be a more culturally appropriate feedback mechanism.

At least in the short term there seem to be limits to the extent to which the idea of 'downwards accountability' will take root within the current social and organisational context in Bangladesh. There was clearly much initial consultation between HEED and community members about the design of recovery programmes, but we found it hard to identify examples of a programme being altered as a result of beneficiary feedback. We found that decisions about what kinds of rehabilitation should be supported had been made neither by the community themselves, nor by HEED's local staff, but by HEED in Dhaka in consultation with its donors. In the case of tree saplings, the Dhaka office sent sapling varieties that could not survive the saline coastal soil conditions.

In view of the large number of agencies, local co-ordination of both relief and recovery efforts was therefore crucial. It was difficult for this evaluation to document how strong these co-ordination efforts had been, or what part HEED was able to play in supporting them. For HEED, as for many other NGOs, it would however been very useful if there had been a more coherent overall NGO strategy for the response, perhaps led by the DFID-funded Government Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, which could have informed its decision making.

Regarding Tearfund's monitoring of HEED's response to the cyclone, the evaluation concludes that many excellent suggestions were made during monitoring visits, but few appeared to have been implemented. Both a tighter system of monitoring is recommended, and far stronger co-ordination between different donors: a HEED Donor Consortium is proposed, to provide better strategic direction and donors need

to co-operate more closely to reduce the burden placed on HEED by all their different visits.

The key recommendations are that **HEED needs to improve the effectiveness of its Emergencies Department**, run by a senior manager skilled in humanitarian work on a permanent basis; it should base future relief responses on well documented assessments. It should focus its efforts on a smaller area, and work more closely with other agencies at all levels. In addition to the proposed Donor Consortium HEED's donors should commission a joint evaluation in response to any future emergency.