

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EVALUATION BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

An underwater earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale centred 250 kilometres south-southwest of Banda Aceh on 26 December 2004 caused a tsunami that devastated coastal areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand, affected the whole of the Maldives and also damaged parts of Myanmar, Malaysia and Somalia. The disaster killed an estimated 227,000 people, of which more than a third were children, displaced 1,777,000 people and caused US\$10 billion worth of damage. The disaster caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami was one of the largest in the last 100 years, particularly in its combination of sudden onset, number of persons killed and number of countries affected simultaneously.

The tsunami disaster presented an unprecedented humanitarian challenge for UNICEF. The media coverage and scale of response from the public and government donors was also unprecedented. UNICEF recognised the importance of demonstrating its achievements and its institutional performance on behalf of children affected by this extraordinary disaster. UNICEF's Evaluation Office commissioned this independent evaluation of UNICEF's response in the emergency and early recovery phase along with a range of other accountability and lesson learning exercises including internal audits, sector and technical evaluations, lessons learned exercises and regular public updates.⁶

The evaluation sought to:

- Identify major achievements of the response with a focus on the emergency and initial recovery phases, 26 December 2004 to 30 June 2005.⁷
- Take note of any constraints and gaps in that response.
- To highlight potential policy implications for the future.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) note that the primary clients for the evaluation are UNICEF senior programme and operational management and staff, both in the field and at headquarters.

A wide range of secondary stakeholders include UNICEF's Executive Board, National Committees, Government donors, NGO partners and, not least, affected populations.⁸

The evaluation work took place between September 2005 and March 2006, with the field work undertaken between September and November 2005 (Annex 2).

1.2 SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS

UNICEF's response to the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster took place in eight countries. As required in the ToR, the main focus of this evaluation is on UNICEF's programme response in Indonesia, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, the three largest programmes by value, covering 87% of financial allocations.

⁶ These initiatives included a Global Tsunami Validation Workshop in Colombo, September 8-9, 2005 and UNICEF public reports Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami - UNICEF Response at 90 Days, Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami - UNICEF Response at Six-Month Update, Building Back Better – a 12-Month Update on UNICEF's Work to Rebuild Children's Lives and Restore Hope since the Tsunami.

⁷ In practice, the evaluation also looked at progress in the response after June 2005 until the time of the field visits in September and October 2005.

⁸ See Annex 1 for the full Terms of Reference.

Three in-depth country case studies were carried out in these countries by a team of nine independent evaluators selected via open selection process (Annex 3).⁹

A tenth evaluator led the writing of the Synthesis Report and conducted conference calls with Country Offices (COs) of non-visited countries in order to broaden the study and take account of lessons learned there.¹⁰ UNICEF's Evaluation Office designated a manager to facilitate and lead the evaluation process, and also provided administrative support.

The evaluation analysed UNICEF's response using the framework of its Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCC)¹¹, the standard OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action, as well as SPHERE minimum standards, where relevant.

The methodology included the following main activities:

- A desk review of internal documents including audits, and external documents including the draft Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) evaluations.¹²
- Preparation of an inception report.
- Interviews with current and former UNICEF staff at country and zone level, with UNICEF regional offices (ROs) and New York Headquarters (NYHQ), Geneva and Copenhagen.
- Interviews with other key stakeholders including government officials, staff of other UN and partner agencies, international, national and local NGOs.¹³
- Data collection including individual and group interviews, meetings and briefings and direct observation. All major findings were triangulated.
- Interviews with IDPs and members of host communities, all of which were treated as confidential.¹⁴
- Draft findings were presented to the January 2006 meeting of UNICEF's Evaluation Committee chaired by the Executive Director.

- Preliminary and final draft reports were circulated for comments before finalizing. A series of validation workshops were held in January 2006 in NYHQ with UNICEF departments and by telephone conference with the three country offices to discuss substantive issues arising from the draft reports.
- ROs and visited COs produced management responses to the country evaluations, which form part of respective country reports.
- This report was internally reviewed against the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) Quality Proforma for humanitarian evaluation.¹⁵

This evaluation highlights a number of important organisational issues that UNICEF needs to work on in the follow-up to this report. However, it should be noted that the main focus of this evaluation is on programme performance and therefore the scope for organisational and operational analysis has been limited.

The evaluators recognised and sought to mitigate the following biases in the evaluation work:

- **Agency Bias.** The majority of interviewees were staff of UNICEF or direct recipients of UNICEF assistance. In the zones, UNICEF staff accompanied the team.¹⁶ The evaluators attempted to include as many other actors as possible in order to factor in the opinions of the wider assistance community, but time was limited to do this.
- **Memory Bias.** People interviewed were asked to recall events taking place nine months earlier. Situation reports and other documents were cross checked in order to confirm dates and information. Where staff had moved on, efforts were made to interview key informants who had been involved in the early response.
- **Evaluator Bias.** The composition and expertise of the evaluation team members is given in Annex 3 with details of prior involvements with UNICEF or in the tsunami response.

⁹The composition of the evaluation team varied between countries.

¹⁰ The non-visited offices completed self-evaluations of their performance against UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (see Annex 9).

¹¹ See Annex 4.

¹² For more information on the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, see section 2.2.

¹³ List of interviewees in Annex 5.

¹⁴ In all over 495 affected people, 186 UNICEF staff and former staff, 105 government officials and 155 staff of other organisations were consulted for this evaluation (Annex 4).

¹⁵ ALNAP 2005.

¹⁶ The UNICEF Evaluation Manager did not accompany the team.

Further information on the evaluation methodology can be found in Annex 6.

The evaluation team experienced the following constraints:

- The questions posed in the TOR were broad and wide-ranging. The inception report limited the scope of the study, but time remained an important constraint for the evaluators, including for the review of the numerous relevant documents.
- Time and logistical constraints limited the coverage of potential interviewees, particularly in the geographically scattered islands of the Maldives. The evaluation also had to contend with external constraints, including Ramadan.
- The timetable for the evaluation process was extended from December 2005 to May 2006 in order to allow sufficient time for report drafting, commenting and validation.
- The field evaluation team was only able to carry out limited assessments against SPHERE minimum standards.
- As mentioned above, the input from non-visited countries was limited to conference calls and documentation, including internal lessons-learned reports. As a result, the evidence and findings from these countries is limited and lacking in independent verification.
- The planning period for an evaluation of this size was highly compressed. The lack of lead time was compensated for by the efforts, commitment and flexibility of all involved.
- Most agencies in the main affected countries complained of evaluation overload. Country Offices were subject to a large number of visits during 2005, including by UNICEF staff, National Committee representatives and other consultants, researchers and evaluators. Internal audits were being carried out in the offices at the same time as the evaluation field visits.
- UNICEF's monitoring systems could not provide definitive information on the numbers of affected persons assisted or the allocation of expenditure between programme and overhead expenditure.

This evaluation took place in the context of a wide range of evaluative and reporting activities focused on the first anniversary of the disaster on 26 December 2005, including five thematic studies being undertaken by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) and an independent evaluation by UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Evaluation. It should be noted that most of this review and evaluation work has been initiated and controlled by international agencies and focuses on their achievements and performance, once again diminishing the central roles played by governments and national and local agencies in the response to the tsunami.

1.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

Section 2 of the report gives an overview of the tsunami disaster and the global response to it. Section 3 looks at the principles that guided UNICEF's response and its performance related to its programme commitments. Section 4 relates UNICEF's overall response to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, to the perspectives of affected populations and gender issues. Section 5 deals with general programme issues, including preparedness, partnership coordination and monitoring. Section 6 covers operations and management topics and Section 7 overall conclusions. Recommendations can be found in Section 8.