

EVALUATION OF THE UNICEF BAM EMERGENCY PROGRAMME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The earthquake that struck the city and district of Bam on December 26, 2003 claimed over 26,000 lives, left 10,000 injured, 75,000 homeless and caused estimated overall losses of US\$1.5 billion. The response to the disaster was led by the Iranian government which has a well-developed disaster response system. Highly unusually, the government invited in international agencies and created 'open skies' for the flow of relief aircraft. This resulted in a massive influx of international agencies and relief material. However, the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) played a central role in the relief response, drawing on its own very substantial resources.

UNICEF immediately responded to the disaster in a generally timely and appropriate way, although, in fact, its contribution which was mainly channelled through the IRCS was small compared to the overall response and the IRCS's own resources. UNICEF subsequently developed recovery programmes with government counterpart departments in the areas of education, water and sanitation, psychosocial support, health and nutrition and child friendly cities. UNICEF's National Committees and other donors and responded strongly, eventually raising over US\$27 million.

UNICEF, working with its government partners, has made an important and lasting contribution to recovery in Bam and to the lives of children and their families. This contribution is widely recognised by citizens and government officials. The evaluation also notes ways in which UNICEF could improve its performance in the future.

It is commendable that UNICEF has stayed in Bam and has had the resources to follow through on its programmes, at the same time incorporating the city and district into its longer-term country programme. The team found that recovery and reconstruction in Bam was by no means finished towards the end of 2006. Many houses remained to be constructed and social issues of drug addiction and depression remain.

It is too early to be sure about the degree of sustainability and longer-term impact of the programmes supported by UNICEF and there are likely to be mixed results. UNICEF has commendably encouraged innovation in its programme support to the government. In some areas, such as family reunification and psychosocial approaches this is very likely to have produced lasting developments in government practice and policy. The prospects for introducing innovation in post-disaster programmes are probably highly context specific and in some areas such as the introduction of computer labs and libraries, the results may be less successful.

2. Education

All 131 schools in Bam and the surrounding region were destroyed or very severely damaged. The earthquake took the lives of an estimated one-third of the city's teachers. UNICEF very quickly provided supplies and tents so that temporary classrooms could be established. The opening of temporary schools and the gathering the surviving children together in friendlier spaces than streets was probably a major contributor to the post-earthquake normalisation process. The back-to-school campaign supported by UNICEF achieved excellent coverage.

In its rehabilitation projects, UNICEF supported and promoted the child friendly school concept, school hygiene promotion and capacity building, professional development, and emergency preparedness for Ministry of Education teachers and staff. This work has been relevant and much appreciated by students, school teachers, principals and Ministry staff. There are questions about the sustainability of some of the projects supported by UNICEF, including the computer laboratories.

3. Psychosocial Support Project

The Bam earthquake had a devastating effect on survivors in Bam, especially on children, given the huge loss of life amongst friends, parents and teachers. It was estimated that 60% of the children suffered from strong post-traumatic reactions and corresponding behavioural problems.

The UNICEF's support for psychosocial responses in both the emergency and rehabilitation phases was highly relevant and important and the coverage of the psychosocial projects was very high. However, the work may not have responded fully to the psychosocial problems of Bam's youth.

The Neshat Centres, established later in the programme, were specifically expected to provide culturally-appropriate psychosocial services to children and the community. The centres need stronger ties with the community to be useful and responsive to the needs of potential clients.

The psychosocial approaches supported in Bam could be adopted as the model for disaster-related interventions at national level and have an impact on national policy and practice. At the time of the evaluation, a national emergency preparedness plan has been developed based on the achievements of psychosocial project in Bam.

4. Water and Environmental Sanitation

In the initial relief period, UNICEF provision included water storage bladders, water purification tablets and other items. UNICEF's main rehabilitation contribution has been to provide over 560km of earthquake-resistant pipes for the renewal of the Bam water system. This was a substantial infrastructure contribution to the overall rehabilitation of Bam and will be a significant achievement. UNICEF's role was to supply materials and monitor progress. It is probable that the Iranian government would have funded this scheme although many of the officials interviewed felt that UNICEF's contribution was very important in helping to avoid delays.

UNICEF could have made more of an input into social aspects of the project and network design. When the scheme goes live UNICEF should monitor accessibility by the poorest and most vulnerable households, particularly looking at issues relating to charges for connections and water metering.

UNICEF was not successful with its latrine-building programme, largely due to the model it chose for implementation and the time delays in starting the project.

5. Family Reunification

Approximately 4,000 children lost one or both parents as a result of the earthquake. Although traditional practice in Iran is to place children without parents in residential care, official policy has moved toward family based care where possible. UNICEF supported a family reunification programme with the Social Welfare Office of the government which was relevant, appropriate and effective and resulted in the majority of children without primary care givers living in extended family-based care. Only 120 children were reported to be living in residential care. This was probably one of UNICEF's greatest achievement in its work in Bam.

In addition to the direct impact of this programme on children, the project experience has also influenced the way that the State Welfare Organisation views childcare in the aftermath of disasters as shown by its response to the Zarand earthquake in 2005.

The family reunification programme demonstrated UNICEF using its position as an inter-governmental organisation, combining practical experience and solid policy work to maximum effect.

6. Child Friendly Spaces

One of UNICEF's first responses to the disaster was the provision of tents where children could enjoy supervised play. This happened within a week of the earthquake and was widely regarded as one of the most visible and successful of the early UNICEF interventions. Subsequently the progression of these tented care centres into kindergartens (ECCCs) was also relevant and appropriate. Coverage was also good. This intervention will certainly have had a positive impact on the lives of children affected by the earthquake and is one of UNICEF's interventions most appreciated by the people of Bam.

The recreational and cultural centres (RCCs) were an important attempt at providing services for adolescents, a group traditionally neglected in the aftermath of disasters. However, the relevance and appropriateness of the RCCs is less clear, as is their future sustainability.

A long term aim of the UNICEF country programme is to increase pre-school education to 25% nationally. This target has already been achieved in Bam and Baravat and shows evidence of an attitudinal change almost certainly produced by the post-disaster ECCC project.

7. Health and Nutrition

The health and nutrition programme was patchy in both design and implementation. The provision of essential drugs, although not monitored, was a sensible emergency measure. The replacement of the cold chain equipment in Bam and districts was useful if not essential. Of the nutrition programmes, the flour fortification will probably have the greatest impact. Human resource constraints have been the biggest issue affecting this sector of UNICEF's response.

Some aspects of the current nutrition programme are interesting and could provide a link to the longer-term programming. The nutrition care centres provide a base on which UNICEF could design some interesting future programmes, especially in poor areas such as Rigan.

8. Child Friendly City Programme

At an early stage after the Bam earthquake, UNICEF saw that there was an opportunity to promote the CFC concept, given the high level of urban destruction. At the time of the evaluation, ten of the twenty school playgrounds were nearly completed. These facilities are a considerable improvement on the standard designs and as such welcomed by the teachers interviewed. The playground designs were weakened by lack of consultation with staff and children about details and by lack of disabled access.

The Olia complex, comprising an early child care centre, primary school and teachers' resource centre, is intended to be a model for future child friendly designs and will probably be completed by May 2007. Construction work on a community centre started in October 2006 and detailed planning work on the child friendly zone has yet to be completed. It was therefore too early to evaluate the outcomes of these projects.

The UNICEF Country Office strategy for Bam avoided involvement in large scale construction projects. At some point this policy changed, possibly prompted by the arrival of a large contribution from the Italian National Committee earmarked for school construction. It has not been possible to find any clear paper trail of how and when the strategy was changed.

UNICEF has limited expertise in construction and in the CFC concept and the project has been hindered by inadequate supervision of the project. The organisation therefore needs to decide whether it gears up its expertise and resources to be able carry out projects of this kind.

9. Cross Cutting Issues

In traditional manner, UNICEF focused on women and children and to some extent on girl children in its programme responses. However, gender analysis was largely absent from programme documentation and UNICEF's response to the disaster lacks a well defined gender policy approach.

UNICEF worked with some of the most vulnerable children, including those who had lost parents or care givers and women-headed households (with latrines). However, the evaluation team did not find evidence of a written vulnerability analysis. This may explain why, for example, the needs of disabled children appear to have been neglected.

In a 2004 strategy document for the Bam programme, UNICEF placed a rights-based approach at the heart of the recovery programme. An extremely positive achievement is that UNICEF succeeded in reminding policy makers and government of the importance of children's rights in the response. However, in this context, more could have been done to encourage government departments to provide more information to and facilitate participation by beneficiaries.

UNICEF has taken a planned and managed approach to integrating the Bam projects into the Iran country programme. This appears to have worked well so far when there is a direct alignment of sectors as with education. To some extent the structural arrangements for the programmes are of less importance than ensuring that all the 'residual' parts of the Bam programme are adequately supported and supervised and the full advocacy and scaling-up opportunities are capitalised on.

As has been noted earlier, UNICEF's pre-existing relationships with government partners in its country programme provided a crucially important asset in carrying out the Bam programme

work. The evaluation team found that generally there was positive collaboration between UNICEF and its government counterparts, although this varied considerably. The Bam programme has generally strengthened and broadened relationships with government counterparts.

UNICEF appears to have fulfilled its coordination commitments in its allocated sectors and forged a strong relationship with the Reconstruction Task Force in Bam.

10. Operations and Programme Management

The sudden expansion of UNICEF's programme in Iran created immense demands on management, administrative structures and capacities. It took a long time to get key posts filled in the programme both on the programme and operations side. The lack of experienced technical staff is particularly important for a developed country such as Iran where UNICEF's comparative advantage is in technical expertise as much as in funding.

The supply component of the Iran programme expanded nearly ten fold in 2004 and most operations were constrained by delivery delays with some stretching to over six months. There were also, at times, administrative delays in making payments to partners.

Both UNICEF and government counterparts faced the challenge of making their respective administrative and financial systems work together and there was frustration at times with each other's bureaucracies. This was probably exacerbated on the UNICEF side by the fact some of the staff were new to UNICEF and they themselves were discovering how the systems worked.

In terms of planning, there was a lack of a single overarching document or plan of action that described the rationale for UNICEF's programming decisions, analysis, the assessment of need etc. Programme quality could have been improved by more focus on assessment, analysis and planning to determine who is in need and how UNICEF can help. Monitoring activity tended to focus on outputs and on the liquidation of cash assistance to government, rather than looking at issues of programme quality, what beneficiaries think and whether any groups have been missed.

11. General Lessons

1. In order for UNICEF to respond effectively to major, sudden onset disasters it is crucial that experienced staff are fielded quickly to back up country office staff. It is unacceptable that there are long waits for staff in key areas such as education. It is also crucial that key operational personnel in human resources, finance and supplies are in place equally quickly.
2. If UNICEF is to be involved in major construction projects, it must develop the policies and in-house expertise to handle such work
3. In terms of quality programming, UNICEF should ensure that there is an adequate focus on the needs of poorer and vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities and that there is also a focus on community consultation and participation. The challenge in post-disaster planning of this kind is to be able to plan and implement rapidly while working very much in a developmental context.
4. In a middle income country such as Iran, inputs that have the highest impact are technical, rather than financial. UNICEF's advocacy for children is important, as is it

experience from other disasters, especially in the area of social policy and practice. However, robust and relevant responses give UNICEF credibility which provides a valuable base to have influence on children's issues in post-disaster situations.

5. Although UNICEF has stayed the longest of any international humanitarian agency in Bam, by the end of 2006 there was still a great deal of work left to be done before the city is fully recovered. UNICEF should consider a five year time frame for major rehabilitation programmes, particularly those involving physical construction.
6. The CFC project has shown that there must be a clear and transparent decision-making process within UNICEF whenever major capital expenditure commitments are made and when decisions are being made that, apparently, change the programme policy in place.
7. UNICEF Iran's partnership work with its government counterparts has been an important and generally positive feature of the Bam response. In post-disaster situations where large amounts of funding are being dispersed rapidly, experience in Bam has shown the importance of time being spent to ensure that both parties understand each other's administrative and financial requirements.
8. The Bam disaster has underlined the importance of preparedness and disaster risk reduction work and UNICEF Iran should continue to build these elements into its country programmes.

12.1 General Recommendations

Country Specific Recommendations

1. UNICEF should ensure that there is adequate follow-up to the Bam programmes to maximise sustainability and advocacy potential. Recommendations in the programme areas can be found in the relevant sections of the report (**Country Office. Immediate**).
2. Because of Iran's disaster prone nature and the emergency prone nature of the region, it is strongly recommended that UNICEF should retain an emergency preparedness and response capacity. Building on the Bam experience, each programme sector should regularly update a preparedness and response plan. This work should be done in conjunction with the UNICEF Regional Office. This work should be incorporated into Annual Work Plans and consideration should be given to an addendum to the CPAP (**Country / Regional Office. Action plan for implementing this recommendation by mid 2007**).
3. A senior UNICEF staff member should have clearly assigned management responsibility for overseeing and developing the disaster response and disaster preparedness part of UNICEF work in Iran. Consideration should also be given to an emergency post within the country programme. (If that person was also available to neighbouring countries, some cost sharing arrangements for the post could be considered) (**Country/Regional Office. June 2007**).
4. UNICEF continues to develop its emergency preparedness frameworks, such as the EPRP. It should ensure that preparedness plans are practical, up-to-date and 'live' documents, not just box-ticking exercises (**Country/Regional/HQ. Ongoing**).

5. For first phase relief responses, UNICEF should develop a limited list of child-friendly items that supplement the basic relief materials provided by the IRCS to be available in-country and regionally (**Country Office with Regional Office / Supplies Department. Finalise by June 2007**).
6. On the policy and advocacy side, UNICEF should continue to work with government counterparts and disaster management structures, the IRCS and other agencies such as UNDP to develop policy, guidelines, good practice in favour of children in emergencies. UNICEF should determine whether it can support the Ministry of Education, the IRCS in areas such as school safety and earthquake preparedness and awareness (**Country Office. Ongoing and review progress at end of 2007**).
7. UNICEF Iran should draw up a management response to this evaluation stating which recommendations have been accepted, the reason for the rejection of any and a work plan for the implementation of the accepted recommendations (**Country Office. Immediate**).

Global Recommendations

1. UNICEF should develop and implement assessment, programme planning, implementation and monitoring methods that focus on situation and vulnerability analysis, beneficiary consultation and programme quality. Elements of this work can very usefully be shared with government counterparts (**NYHQ/Regional/Country Office. Demonstrable progress by end 2007**).
2. UNICEF needs clear policies about whether or not to embark on post-disaster infrastructure projects. There is a strong argument for UNICEF to be involved in school reconstruction, so that it can introduce and promote child friendly concepts. UNICEF will therefore need better global expertise in large scale infrastructure and reconstruction projects. This should go beyond the MoU with UNOPs and should include partnerships with multi-laterals such as the World Bank who have this expertise. UNICEF can develop expertise in social aspects of infrastructure projects as well as understanding better how to manage such projects. This will necessitate the development of in-house capacity (**NYHQ. Clear policy and implementation plan by mid 2007**).
3. UNICEF should give consideration to including vulnerability considerations within the CCCs, so that there is a clear instruction that vulnerable groups be sought out and supported (**NYHQ. Mid 2007**).