

1.2 The capacities evaluation

The current evaluation was co-managed by the Evaluation Office in UNDP, New York, and the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), and guided by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of ActionAid International, AIDMI, CordAid, UNDP and UNICEF, and quality assured by a wider working group.

There were three core members of the evaluation team. Arjuna Parakrama, overall team leader, was responsible for the inception report, leading the Sri Lanka field study and for the claim-holder surveys. He is the primary author of the Sri Lanka country report and contributed to the Indonesia country report. Elisabeth Scheper was team leader for the Indonesia and Thailand field studies and participated in the Sri Lanka field study. She is the primary author of the Thailand and Indonesia country reports and contributed to the Sri Lanka country report. Smruti Patel conducted the desk reviews and literature surveys for all countries. She was team leader for the Maldives study and participated in the Indonesia and Thailand field studies, contributing to those reports. She is the primary author of the Maldives country report. All team members contributed to this regional report.

The evaluation process was supported by Janey Lawry White (UNDP consultant), who was a team member for the Maldives field study, contributed to the Maldives country report, and provided project management throughout. National consultants were recruited in Indonesia (Abdur Rofi and Ms Arabiyani, a UNIFEM programme officer who assisted with interviews with women's groups in Aceh) and Sri Lanka (Sudarshana Gunawardana). In Thailand, local UNDP consultants assisted the team, and in the Maldives, staff from a local NGO, the Care Society, arranged and accompanied the field trips, and facilitated community and island level discussions. The final text was edited by Tony Vaux, an independent consultant who was team leader of the DEC evaluation of the tsunami response. Tony Vaux also provided quality assurance inputs, notably to increase compliance with the ALNAP Quality Proforma and TEC requirements.

1.3 Purpose and method

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the impact of the tsunami response, primarily the role of international actors, on local and national capacities for relief and recovery, and risk reduction (see Annex 1, Terms of Reference, for more details). It is envisaged that the evaluation will provide lessons that serve to strengthen ongoing activities and future responses, and also to hold international actors accountable to their donors and, if possible, to the affected people themselves. The following six objectives are identified in the Terms of Reference (ToR).

- Assess how local and national capacities changed as a result of the tsunami response.
- Assess how well international actors engaged with local and national capacities in providing relief and recovery assistance.

- Assess the intended and unintended changes to local and national capacities as a result of the tsunami response by international actors.
- Assess the extent to which transition/risk reduction/recovery programming, planned and implemented, is likely to influence local and national capacities.
- Distil lessons learned for efforts to strengthen local and national capacities for future crisis response and recovery.
- Ensure that all the above assess and highlight gender differences and the varied experiences of women and men.

The ToR emphasise the need to distinguish between different phases of the response. The team used three notional phases: immediate emergency, early recovery phase, and transition from recovery to development. But there is considerable overlap between these phases and considerable variation between sectors, locations and contexts.

Fieldwork was undertaken between mid-September and mid-November 2005 in four of the affected countries, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Thailand. These were selected to illustrate a cross-section of situations reflecting factors including: extent of tsunami damage and reconstruction needs; the response capacity with regard to state as well as civil-society capacity; the level of international support; and the local context, including pre-existing conflicts, linked to addressing capacity needs and availability of evaluative evidence. Summaries of the separate reports on the four case-study countries are attached as annexes to this report (Annexes 2–5) and the full reports are available separately. The absence of India perhaps needs some explanation. Both Thailand and India were cautious in their response to international humanitarian assistance, asking only for technical help. Of these two cases, Thailand was selected for this study for practical reasons.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the term ‘capacities’ is understood as the interconnected set of skills and abilities to access services and programmes, to influence and set policies and longer term recovery/reconstruction agendas, and to open and use the space to hold duty-bearers at all levels accountable, and will include the continuing processes through which these outcomes are achieved. The assessment of changes in capacity requires a level of nuance and a depth of analysis that differ substantively from evaluations of general efficiency and timeliness of response. Capacity is the bridge between immediate responses and longer term sustainability. Capacity is not just related to technical skills but also to context: the issues are played out within a complex political economy mediated by unequal power relations.

The importance of capacities is widely recognised in international principles relating to disaster response, but there is considerable variation in interpreting the term and in defining responsibilities. This evaluation provided an opportunity to explore this and will hopefully lead toward a better understanding. In the concluding sections below we examine the response to the tsunami disaster against international principles and consider the relationship of participation, consultation, capacity strengthening and rights.

Box 1.1 Capacities in humanitarian standards

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. (IFRC, 1994)

Disaster-affected populations must not be seen as helpless victims, and this includes members of vulnerable groups. They possess, and acquire skills and capacities and have structures to cope with and respond to a disaster situation that need to be recognised and supported. (Sphere, 2004)

The ToR required the team to consider capacities at all levels – national, provincial, district, community and sub-community. This was done by dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders. Full lists of interviewees are included in the individual country reports, and Table 1.1¹ provides a summary.

Table 1.1 Distribution of meetings and discussions in the evaluation process

Location ²	INGOs & Red Cross/Crescent	UN	Bilateral	Government, national level	Government, (sub-) district level	Local and national NGOs ³
Indonesia	25	35	7	13	7	18
Group meetings	23	10	2	1	0	7
Sri Lanka	78	40	10	25	25	123
Maldives	9	22	11	3	8	16
Thailand	5	14	0	14	6	12
Totals	140	121	30	55	46	176

The evaluation team focused on capacities at the community level because these capacities are often excluded from evaluations of humanitarian response and recovery. Assessment of capacity at national and provincial/district levels is easier and less time-consuming due to the greater accessibility, ease of articulation and resources available. Based on feedback received from a preliminary desk review⁴ and meetings, a list of issues was drawn up by the team as a guide for further analysis and a schedule of field visits planned. In keeping with the ToR and both HQ and in-country discussions, the country studies have a twin sectoral and cross-cutting thematic focus. These were selected by stakeholder consensus. The three sectors are:

- 1 shelter (initial camps, temporary shelters and permanent housing)
- 2 livelihoods

1 There are serious problems of definition in this table and it should only be taken as a rough guide.

2 In addition, there were meetings with headquarters staff of UN agencies and also with members of the steering committee.

3 This includes some community representatives in the case of Sri Lanka.

4 In the case of Indonesia, the desk review became available only after the visit.

3 psychosocial support.

The six themes are:

- 1 land ownership, displacement and resettlement
- 2 'protection' of women (and children) and women's empowerment
- 3 multiple-marginalised and vulnerable groups, including the sick and elderly
- 4 (migrant) labour
- 5 strengthening local civil-society structures and downward accountability
- 6 national risk reduction and disaster preparedness plans (with local and media components).

1.3.1 Beneficiary/claim-holder surveys

In Aceh (Indonesia) and Sri Lanka, claim-holder surveys were conducted using a questionnaire in the local language to collect both quantitative and qualitative feedback from a random sample of the affected population in the worst-hit districts. Questions focused on:

- the relationship between efficiency and speed of delivery and enhancement of local capacity
- the process of consultation
- modalities for ensuring that community hierarchies and elites do not capture the benefits of the response.

The Aceh survey was a disappointing experience and much of the data has been lost. What remains is presented in Annex 6. A summary of the Sri Lanka survey is presented as Annex 7. The distribution of interviews in both surveys is summarised in Table 1.2.

Evaluation findings were therefore based on field studies corroborated by a desk review of secondary documents, as well as claim-holder surveys. Drafts of the country reports were updated following comments by the Steering Committee and Working Group, stakeholders and the wider TEC membership. These near-final reports were then validated by stakeholders at exit stakeholder workshops in case study countries (except Thailand).

1.3.2 Biases and constraints

The relevant background of the team members is as follows.

Professor Arjuna Parakrama currently teaches cultural studies and discourse analysis at the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. He has worked for the past 14 years as a consultant in the community development sector, specialising in capacity strengthening and working on conflict, notably with Oxfam Australia, and has been UNDP Peace & Development Advisor in Nepal. He has participated in evaluations of UNDP programmes in the Philippines, Macedonia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.