



In the Wake of the Tsunami

An evaluation of Oxfam International's
response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

Tsunami Evaluation series

As part of its ongoing aim to learn from experience and to hold itself accountable for its actions, Oxfam has commissioned a wide-ranging evaluation of its response to the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. This comprises 14 thematic evaluations, as listed below. Twelve of the fourteen studies have been conducted by independent consultants, while the remaining two were conducted by members of the Oxfam International Tsunami Fund secretariat (* see below).

Recurring issues and key themes from the 14 individual evaluations are brought together in this evaluation summary report, 'In the Wake of the Tsunami'.

The reports available in this series are:

Evaluation summary report: 'In the Wake of the Tsunami'

Thematic evaluations:

1. Livelihoods Review (Rajan Alexander)
2. Public Health Review (Pradeep Bharwad and Wim Klassen)
3. Shelter Review (Sarbjit Singh Sahota and Dave Hodgkin)
4. Gender Review (Annette Salkeld)
5. Downward Accountability Review (Ravinder Kumar, Catalyst Management Systems (CMS))
6. Corporate Accountability Review (John Chilver*)
7. Advocacy Review (Alasdhair Collins)
8. Disaster Risk Reduction Review (Man B. Thapa)
9. Partners and Partnerships Review (Stuart Kenward)
10. Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Review (Catherine Lowery)
11. Communications Review (Alex Wynter)
12. Funding and Finance Review (Clive Surman and John Chilver*)
13. Management Issues Review (Simon Harris)
14. OITF Architecture and Structure Review (Geoffrey Salkeld)

The evaluation summary report and the executive summaries for the individual reviews can be found on the Oxfam website at www.oxfam.org/emergencies/tsunami. Full versions of the individual reviews are available on request from the Oxfam International Secretariat via www.oxfam.org/contact

This evaluation series was produced with the support of Shobha Raghavan, Raymond Mubayiwa, and Sarah Azia from the OITF M&E team.

Philip Horgan, Oxfam International Tsunami Fund, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, December 2009

Cover image: Rod Slip, Oxfam Programme Coordinator and Mohamed Haniffa-Abdul Faiz, Field Officer for Oxfam partner Kinniya Vision, construct a 11,000 cubic metre water tank in 'CTB camp', Kinniya, Trincomalee District, eastern Sri Lanka. Credit: Tori Ray/Oxfam

*The Funding and Finance, and Corporate Accountability reviews have been conducted by members of the Oxfam International Tsunami Fund secretariat.

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Acronyms

AIPRD	Australia Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development
BRR	Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi/ Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias
CFW	Cash-For-Work
CHF	Cooperative Housing Federation
CNFE	Coastal 'Non-Farm Economy'
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
GAM	Free Aceh Movement or Gerakan Aceh Merdeka
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HACT	Humanitarian Accountability Coordination Team
HCMG	Humanitarian Consortium Management Group
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
OI	Oxfam International
OITF	Oxfam International Tsunami Fund
PRIME	Preparedness, Response and Influence of policy: a Model of Emergency (Oxfam programme)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
NGO/INGO	Non Governmental Organisation/ International Non Governmental Organisation
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
TACT	Tsunami Advocacy Coordination Team
TFMT	Tsunami Fund Management Team
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Committee
WCDM	Women's Coalition for Disaster Management
UN	United Nations

Foreword

Oxfam's response to the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 represented the largest humanitarian response in our organisation's history, and was funded by unprecedented public generosity. Oxfam is committed to be a learning organisation; it is also committed to transparency and accountability to the millions of people who funded our work and to the beneficiaries of our programmes. Our commitment to learn from the tsunami experience is demonstrated in this wide-ranging review of our work, which comes at the end of five years of activities. The Tsunami Fund has allowed us to go much further to find ways to achieve that accountability at local levels. Publication of this evaluation summary and the series of thematic evaluation reports, for which we commissioned external experts, is part of that desire to be transparent and accountable.

This evaluation complements the wide range of analysis conducted by Oxfam over the five years of the tsunami response, and the lessons learned will assist the organisation as it strives to provide the highest quality in its humanitarian work. Many of the recommendations contained in this report, such as enhancing collaboration between affiliates, improving our operational preparedness between emergencies, ensuring long-term thinking in our humanitarian work, bridging the gaps between field staff and head offices, and striving for consistency, are already being promoted across Oxfam.

This is the final part of Oxfam's tsunami response. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those, whether donors, staff members, partners, or consultants, who participated in this unique and historic programme.



Barbara Stocking,
Chair, Oxfam International Tsunami Fund Board



Barbara Stocking
DBE, Chief
Executive,
Oxfam GB and
Chair, Oxfam
International
Tsunami
Fund Board

Introduction

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 caused widespread devastation, killing 227,000 people across 14 countries, with Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand the hardest hit. This exceptional emergency resulted in Oxfam's largest ever emergency response, extending across seven countries and over a period of five years. Oxfam raised \$294m from across the world to fund its work, 92 per cent of which came from an unprecedented public response. The disaster triggered Oxfam's first truly co-ordinated response as a global confederation, with 12 Oxfam affiliates co-ordinating their efforts through the Oxfam International Tsunami Fund (OITF).

As we come to the end of 2009 and the closure of Oxfam's tsunami response, it is an appropriate time to reflect on what was achieved, and what lessons are to be drawn from Oxfam's experience that will improve assistance in future emergencies. This report highlights some of the best of Oxfam's experience – strategies and activities to be repeated in other emergency responses – and identifies areas where it needs to do things differently. Indeed, Oxfam is challenged by its own staff, who asked 'Are we truly a learning organisation?'. Is Oxfam willing to learn from its shortcomings as well as its successes?

This report is written for all those interested in Oxfam's humanitarian response, Oxfam managers and staff involved in this or other humanitarian responses, members of the public who donated to the appeals, and members of the humanitarian community who wish to learn about some of the achievements and challenges that Oxfam and its partners faced.

The objective of the evaluation process was two-fold: firstly, to enable Oxfam to reflect on and learn in practice from its response to the tsunami and therefore improve its response to future emergencies and, secondly, by sharing these findings, to enable Oxfam to hold itself accountable to funders (predominantly the public), beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.

The evaluation, which comes at the end of Oxfam's five-year response, comprises 14 thematic evaluations covering the work of the different Oxfam affiliates active in the response and across the countries of Indonesia (Aceh), Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar,

Thailand, the Maldives, and Somalia, where the organisation was active. Oxfam has undertaken considerable evaluation work during the period of the tsunami, and the evaluation series builds on this prior work. In the interests of impartiality, the studies were conducted by a team of independent consultants who are specialists in their fields. For details of the evaluation series, please refer to the inside cover of this report and for further details of the evaluation methodology please see Annex 1. This evaluation will be complemented with a study into long-term impact and sustainability issues conducted between 2010 and 2012.

This document brings together a summary of recurring issues and themes from across the 14 individual evaluations and contributions from other evaluations conducted by Oxfam over the past five years. For the sake of brevity, some topics, such as the successful external media work conducted by Oxfam, management issues, issues of organisational structure, and tsunami M&E programme and finance policy issues, are covered only in passing, while other topics, such as successes in advocacy, are covered briefly in this document. For full details of these topics, please see the relevant individual studies.

Similarly, findings from Oxfam's extensive research programme in Sri Lanka and India are covered in 'Oxfam International Tsunami Fund, Research and DRR Programme Capstone Report'. More detailed information on Oxfam's tsunami activities is also to be found in the 'Oxfam International Tsunami Fund End of Programme Report, (2008)'. Both these reports are available at: www.oxfam.org/emergencies/tsunami.

Chapter 1 of this summary provides a brief introduction to the tsunami and the response of Oxfam and its partners, highlighting a selection of key achievements. Chapter 2 examines some of the key issues and challenges in relation to the response, while Chapter 3 (intended primarily for Oxfam staff) focuses on key strategic recommendations for Oxfam. Chapter 4 looks at some of the changes within Oxfam's humanitarian work since the tsunami hit and at current organisational initiatives to develop response capacities.



Banda Aceh - Fariz
13 years old lived
on this spot with
his parents and
his siblings, now
their home is gone,
smashed to pulp by
the passing tsunami.
He survives with his
sister and they have
both been adopted
by their neighbour,
who miraculously
survived with all her
children. Credit:
Jim Holmes/Oxfam

Chapter

1

An overview of Oxfam's response



Background

On 26 December 2004, a massive earthquake measuring 9.3 on the Richter scale struck 100 miles off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, creating a series of waves up to 30 metres high. The tsunami waves devastated coastal towns and villages across the Indian Ocean, and reached the east coast of Africa. Indonesia (particularly Aceh province), Sri Lanka, the Maldives, India, and Thailand were the countries worst hit by the tsunami, which caused the deaths of approximately 230,000 people and caused some 1.7 million to be displaced.¹ On 28 March 2005 a further earthquake measuring 8.7 on the Richter scale struck Nias, an island off the coast of North Sumatra, leaving 839 people dead and over 6,279 injured.

The international response to the tsunami disaster was unparalleled, with a staggering \$13bn raised by governments, businesses, and the general public; this amounted to over \$7,000 per capita for tsunami victims.² In the aftermath of the disaster, relief organisations small and large rushed to the scene. In Aceh province of Indonesia alone it is estimated that almost 400 organisations responded, along with military teams from 17 countries.³

In Aceh and in Sri Lanka, responses to the disaster took place within a complex and rapidly changing military environment. Following the tsunami, the separatist Free Aceh Movement (Gerekan Aceh Merdeka, or GAM) declared a ceasefire with the Indonesian military, after 30 years of guerrilla campaigns. In August 2005, a peace deal was signed committing GAM to disarmament and to the dismantling of its military wing.⁴ In Sri Lanka, there was a pause in the long-running civil war between the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and the Colombo-based government to allow relief work to take place. However, hostilities resumed in 2005, eventually culminating in the military defeat of the LTTE in May 2009.⁵

Oxfam's response: wide-reaching and diverse

Oxfam and its partners responded with relief, rehabilitation, and recovery activities across seven countries affected by the tsunami: Indonesia (specifically Aceh and Nias), Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand, and Somalia. These activities

Photo opposite:
Marina Beach
in Chennai was
devastated by the
tsunami.
Credit: Rajendra
Shaw/Oxfam



Saiful, a water pump keeper, at the Oxfam pumping station in Jangut Village, near Lamno, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Oxfam's projects in the northwest of Indonesia cover a range of activities such as the provision of water and sanitation facilities, health promotion, and cash support, to assist returnees with the reconstruction of housing and communal infrastructure and the recovery of livelihood assets. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

stretched from the days immediately following the tsunami in 2004 through to 2009. Activities undertaken included support for livelihoods, public health, and shelter for affected communities. This report provides some details of that response, though it is extremely difficult to do justice to the broad scale and diversity of activities carried out by Oxfam and its partners in such a short summary.

The tsunami response saw an extremely large expansion in Oxfam's operations across the main response countries of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and India. In Aceh alone, the programme grew from no staff to 873 in the first year and in Sri Lanka, where Oxfam's existing development programmes were paused to enable response to the tsunami, staff numbers were around 400 by December 2005. With Aceh suffering the worst from the tsunami, there was an unprecedented willingness by the whole organisation to resource the region with many of its most experienced staff in the first few weeks of the emergency.⁶

Oxfam and its partners provided support to hundreds of thousands of individuals and communities. It is impossible to say exactly how many individuals they helped because many people benefited from one or more different Oxfam projects; helping one person to rebuild their life through four separate interventions is not the same as helping four different people. However, solely as an indication of the scale of the response, the activities of Oxfam and its partners are estimated to have benefited a cumulative total of 2.5 million people directly and indirectly affected by the tsunami, over the five-year period.

In its response, Oxfam worked alongside more than 170 local, national, and international partner organisations to deliver emergency programmes. Partners ranged from community organisations such as Thirupperunthurai Community Development Organisation in Sri Lanka to international organisations such as the microfinance giant BRAC (formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) and Education International, the global union federation of organisations representing teachers and education workers.

Water and sanitation

First on the scene when the waves hit were local individuals and small-scale organisations offering immediate help and support to people caught in the devastation. Oxfam's assessment and response started in the first few days, with rapid assessments of the

destruction and support for immediate needs, in particular the provision of clean water on a large scale. Programmes providing clean water extended for several years in different countries; in Aceh, water trucking continued for three years and provided over 300m litres of clean water for people affected by the tsunami.

Early water trucking activities were followed by the rehabilitation and construction of wells and water systems on a large scale. Oxfam and its partners cleaned, rehabilitated, or constructed over 10,800 wells, drilled or rehabilitated 90 boreholes, constructed or rehabilitated 55 gravity flow water systems, and built a municipal water system to supply 10,000 people in Aceh.

In parallel, latrines were constructed and sewage systems built, an effort matched with public health hygiene messaging. Oxfam and its partners built over 12,000 latrines, distributed over 67,000 family hygiene kits, trained over 2,500 health volunteers, and constructed over 10km of drainage systems. Oxfam's later work included support for the resettlement of displaced communities in Ampara in the east of Sri Lanka and support for the provision of clean water and sanitation facilities in the Manik displacement camps in northern Sri Lanka, following the military defeat of the LTTE.

Everywhere it worked, Oxfam established community committees to ensure the sustainability of its interventions and long-term access to water: 600 training sessions were carried out to help local communities operate and maintain their water supply systems, while 2,500 community health volunteers were trained in safe water practices and hygiene promotion messages, including 160 child-to-child facilitators.

Oxfam was praised by the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) for its 'outstanding role in relation to water and sanitation across hundreds or even thousands of locations across the region'.⁷

Support for livelihoods

Oxfam and its partners also undertook extensive work to rebuild the livelihoods destroyed by the tsunami, across the response countries and in a variety of sectors – in the devastated fishing sector, the farming sector, and in non-farming sector activities such as small business generation and micro-finance initiatives. The range of livelihood initiatives undertaken was vast, involving the majority of the 170 organisations that Oxfam partnered with, and reaching around 960,000 beneficiaries.

In the early days of the response, short-term jobs were created by Oxfam and other NGOs for activities such as the removal of bodies, removing debris, and clearing drainage channels. These activities were carried out through a mixture of so-called 'cash programmes': cash-for-work and food-for-work schemes. These were complemented by cash grants, for example for businesses to replace essential items and to inject money into local economies.

As the response progressed, the focus shifted to restoring livelihoods for fishing and agricultural communities. In the fishing sector, Oxfam helped to replace fishing boats and supported better access to markets by, for example, providing rickshaws for transportation, refrigerated trucks and fish stalls, and through construction of a dock in Nias, Indonesia and a shipyard in Somalia.

Recognising the number of aid organisations already supporting the fisheries sector, Oxfam prioritised its support to the farm sector and to small business development. A wide range of activities was undertaken in the farm sector, supporting improved agricultural practices, the restocking of livestock, and the development of co-operatives and farm businesses.

Examples of agricultural sector activities included the promotion of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) methodologies to improve rice yields in India and the promotion of home gardens in Sri Lanka. In India, Oxfam's partner ToFarm helped implement SRI methodologies in around 450,000 hectares (or 20 per cent of the rice cultivation area) of Tamil Nadu state. In Sri Lanka, the promotion of traditional home gardens proved to be very successful, helping to supply a significant proportion of households' nutritional needs.

As the response progressed, micro-credit and micro-finance schemes were established in large numbers. Typically, micro-credit schemes involved small 'self-help groups' of savers and borrowers, while micro-finance initiatives were based on small-scale loan schemes delivered through small-scale financial organisations.

Support for shelter and other construction

Provision of shelter was one of the largest needs in the aftermath of the tsunami, with 1.7 million people displaced across the countries affected.⁸ Oxfam and its partners distributed non-food items to those in need: typically such items included blankets, jerry-cans, tents, and plastic sheeting for the construction of shelters.

Construction of temporary and transitional housing was conducted on a large scale in Sri Lanka and Aceh, and to a lesser extent in

India, to meet the needs of those made homeless. Housing designs were developed in collaboration with communities, and often different designs were used depending on cultural needs.

Oxfam and its partners supplied tenting, sheeting, and other temporary shelters to over 40,000 people and constructed or rehabilitated 4,800 transitional houses and over 2,900 permanent houses across the response countries. In total, Oxfam and its partners trained over 1,800 people in skills such as carpentry, masonry, and house painting. However, construction of permanent housing was typically slower than anticipated, with complex issues of land tenure and relocation to be resolved.

Oxfam also supplied more than 8,000 cubic metres of sustainable plantation timber from Australia to other agencies for the construction and repair of houses, transitional shelters, and community buildings.

In order to enable families to return to devastated communities and to allow access for relief supplies, Oxfam and its partners constructed or cleared more than 100km of roads and built 31 bridges.

Education

Oxfam partnered with Education International to implement a school rehabilitation programme in Aceh and with national NGO Metta in Myanmar. Education International programmes involved the repair and construction of 35 schools, along with the full range of activities (teacher training, trauma counselling) required for children to return to normal schooling.

In Myanmar, Oxfam's partner Metta renovated or rebuilt 67 schools and established 19 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres following the tsunami and Cyclone Marlar, which struck in April 2006. In May 2008 Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar, causing widespread devastation and destroying almost all the schools constructed by Metta in the Ayeyarwady delta. Subsequently, 20 schools and eight ECCD centres have been reconstructed as dual-purpose buildings for school activities and as cyclone shelters.

Advocacy and influence

Considerable success was achieved by Oxfam in its policy-based research, which fed into advocacy work with the Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (BRR/



Two boys play up for the camera while an Oxfam worker records activities in Lamrabo IDP camp, near Banda Aceh, where people from Pulo Aceh have sought refuge. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

Chapter 2

Reflections and Recommendations: Response Issues

Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi) and with local and national governments in Sri Lanka and India. The allocation of resources and changes in policy by government agencies brought about significant real changes to the lives of affected people and multiplied the benefits that Oxfam and its partners brought to the emergency response.

One of the defining features of the post-tsunami operating environment was the loss of land and property rights of large numbers of families. Advocacy successes included the legal provision of housing for renters and squatters and equality in land title deeds for women and men in Aceh. These were important policies, ensuring that past inequities would not be replicated in communities after the tsunami.

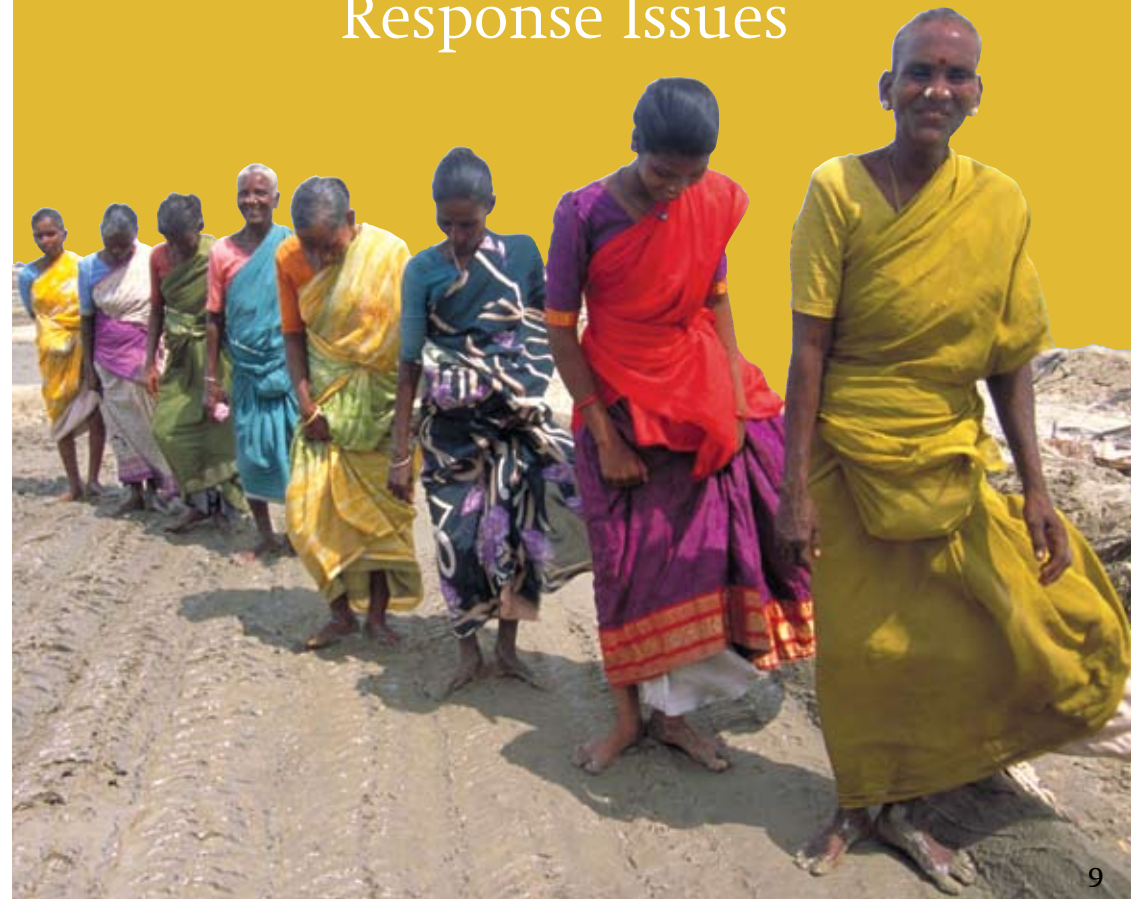
in Sri Lanka, Oxfam supported the establishment of the Women's Coalition for Disaster Management (WCDM). This was a regular forum involving the participation of women from camp committees and of humanitarian agencies, and established a direct line of communication between women in affected communities and those in a position to act. This simple model was very well received by both the community and by participating agencies.

In India, research carried out by Loyola College was reworked by Oxfam and submitted to the Tamil Nadu state government and shared with partners. An accompanying film was made, showing the living conditions of people in temporary shelters. As a direct result, the state government allocated a grant of \$1.15m for the repair of transitional settlements. The funds were earmarked for the repair of damaged roofs and for the provision of facilities such as toilets and bathrooms for 27,318 shelters in the tsunami-affected coastal districts.

At the international level, Oxfam advocated in the early days following the tsunami for the delivery of new money pledged by the international community, for effective relief for countries affected by the disaster (for example, relief from international debt), and for the promotion of trade with these countries. It also lobbied for and gained permission to re-enter Aceh to undertake relief work, having left the province in 2004.⁹

There is a great deal more to report on regarding Oxfam's programmes, particularly how gender issues were incorporated and issues of preparedness. Some of these issues are elaborated upon in the discussion that follows.

Photo opposite:
Women working
in the salt pans at
Vedaranyam, India.
Credit:Rajendra
Shaw/Oxfam





Habsah Budiman, who lives in Kulee village near Sigli, Aceh Province, Indonesia, is a widow who has received a small loan or grant from Oxfam to help her to start making mats in order to earn an income. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

Introduction

Chapter 1 gives a brief outline of Oxfam's response, but how effective was it? What has Oxfam learned from the reflection process and what lessons has it identified to improve future humanitarian responses?

This chapter outlines a selection of key issues and recurring themes from the evaluation studies. The findings here relate to Oxfam, the factors affecting the quality of its response, questions relating to the strategic decisions that were taken, and the approaches that Oxfam used. For further details on individual issues, please see the individual studies in the evaluation series; a list of these studies, and how to access both the executive summaries and full reports, can be found at the front of this document. In the text below, all quotes are taken from the relevant evaluation study referred to in the section heading, unless stated otherwise.

In reflecting on the nature of Oxfam's response, it is useful to consider the state of humanitarian work within Oxfam at the time of the tsunami. Significantly, Oxfam's central Humanitarian Consortium Management Group (the HCMG) had only been established in the year before the tsunami hit. Oxfam, like many other international NGOs, is a rapidly evolving organisation and many changes have taken place since December 2004. Please see Chapter 4 for brief details of recent and current organisational developments.

As with many organisations, Oxfam strives to perform to the highest standards, and this is reflected internally in communications with staff and in external documents. To some, such statements are aspirational, while to others they are statements of what is obtainable and to others still they are concrete objectives by which Oxfam should be judged. Thus the analysis of these evaluation studies finds itself caught between the aspirational statements used internally to spur staff on to higher-quality work and the internal realities of Oxfam's work. It is hoped that this series of evaluations will help Oxfam move forward along its development path and to meet its aspirations.

During its tsunami response Oxfam undertook a large amount of evaluation and other review work; such reflections have fed into changes in its programmes and have prompted organisational changes, as discussed in Chapter 4 below.

Issues of livelihoods

'The strategic emphasis on the farm¹⁰ sector was very successful, with Oxfam chalking up significant achievements.' The livelihoods work of the organisation and its partners covered activities in the fisheries, farm, and coastal 'non-farm economy' (CNFE) sectors.¹¹ Oxfam's approach in the livelihoods sector was to respond to the gaps in emergency responses provided by other agencies, which led it to concentrate on agriculture 'as the pivotal sector from the start, a decision that was questioned at the time but which has since been widely vindicated'.¹²

What worked?

Oxfam's experience in India and Sri Lanka demonstrated that low-input models built upon local capacity and traditional practice, and those that fitted with the evolving policy environment, had the greatest effects. One such programme in India by partner ToFarm, which aimed to promote System of Rice Intensification (SRI) cultivation, proved highly successful and was considered to have had the most impact of any programme in Oxfam's tsunami livelihood response. It attracted praise from the World Bank: 'During 2006–07... only 4,600 hectares were cultivated with this method. Now, almost 450,000 hectares or about 20 percent of Tamil Nadu rice cultivation area are under SRI. In the long term, increased rice yields will boost nutrition, improve health, and drive the local economy. If Indian farmers use SRI on just 25 percent of the conventionally-farmed area, estimates are they could grow an additional 5 million tons of rice – enough to feed about four million families a year.'¹³

The success in India with SRI was due, in large part, to a favourable in-country policy environment, where the government imposed no cap on market prices for rice products and had a policy of reducing subsidies for inorganic agricultural inputs. Oxfam acted to promote a technology that was closely aligned with the priorities of the government, at both state and central levels, thus multiplying its effectiveness.

By contrast, although SRI also demonstrated significant promise in Sri Lanka, here 'there was not the same momentum for its spread, as the policy environment was less conducive. Here the spread of SRI was constrained by cost/price squeezes that eroded much of its competitive advantage'. In Sri Lanka, it was programmes

that promoted home gardens that were a ‘resounding success’. Home gardens are a tradition in Sri Lanka: they are maintained by farmers, villagers, and fishermen and supply a significant proportion of households’ nutritional needs. Participation rates were high, and there was no need to create demand here as there was in India.

For women, livelihoods were improved, but they did not escape poverty

‘Where women were concerned, Oxfam’s livelihood interventions may have fallen short of achieving real economic breakthroughs, but they did give women greater social empowerment in many significant ways, across countries.’

Analysis shows that: ‘In general, the support that Oxfam and its partners provided to women did not allow them to reach income parity with men or to escape poverty.’¹⁴ Across the response, women ‘were supported largely in low-income-earning, low-status, and often domestically focused, home-based industries such as handicrafts, cake-making, and rearing small animals. With some exceptions, few other options were provided.’¹⁵ However, in general, many women did increase their incomes from pre-tsunami levels. Often this benefited their families; the extra money was spent on purchasing food for the family, sending children, particularly girls, to school, and on improving household amenities.

Macro issues: oversupply and inflation

Sustainability of fishing sector

With pressure to act, complex macro issues were not the main immediate concern. Fish stocks in many of the tsunami-affected areas were already heavily exploited, which meant that there was a requirement to reduce fishing activity rather than to, as Oxfam (or its partners) did, increase the availability of fishing boats and encourage shifts of labour into the fisheries sector. Similarly, the strategy of encouraging a shift from fishing to fish farming was not adequately pursued, and where it was, it yielded mixed results. This strategy was devised to avoid over-exploitation of limited marine resources, as the increased number of fishing craft after the tsunami resulted in increasingly small catches per craft.

Oversupply of small-scale businesses

With hundreds of NGOs working to support small businesses across the response, duplication of enterprises was common, with organisations ‘dipping into the same basket of livelihood options with the result of creating oversupply [for example, of similar village shops], depressing both the market for trained labour and products’. The expansion of many small-scale businesses took place with the assistance of credit facilities supplied to members of self-help groups supported by Oxfam and its partners. The limited success of these businesses resulted in very real problems for self-help group members, such as loan defaults and increased debt, with limited means to repay.

Inflation

Many tsunami-affected areas suffered from ‘double digit’ inflation following the tsunami. This was perhaps not surprising given the billions of dollars pumped into local economies by national governments and the international community. The tsunami response gave Oxfam an opportunity to scale up interventions such as cash programming and micro-finance which were significant in improving livelihoods. However, Oxfam’s cash programmes (particularly the use of cash grants and loans) contributed to local inflationary pressures. Rapidly rising prices of inputs depressed profits or caused the suspension of small businesses, directly affecting Oxfam’s small business development initiatives. As one report noted, ‘The tofu/tempe trainee groups all started their businesses with relative success but the recent massive rise in the price of soybeans has resulted in all businesses coming to a halt.’¹⁶

The livelihoods review suggests that ‘since Oxfam cannot dictate the actions of other players, it could have pursued different strategies of its own that would have mitigated inflationary trends, rather than exacerbating them’. In comparison with cash loans or grants, ‘micro-credit/micro-finance activities mopped up excess liquidity in local economies by channelling cash into various savings mechanisms. By doing so, they provided the perfect antidote to inflationary pressures driven by cash programming’. Overall, it is suggested that a greater appreciation was needed of the macro effects created in the broader response.



An Oxfam helicopter with ruins in the foreground in Drienrampak, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Credit: Jane Beesley/Oxfam



Children washing at a tap stand installed with support from Oxfam. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

Restoring livelihoods: organisational issues

While many successes were found in the livelihoods work of Oxfam and its partners, strategic weaknesses were apparent. ‘While [Oxfam’s] global livelihood strategy was relatively clear, country-specific strategies, however, were often confusing. There were deficiencies in programme design and implementation processes due to lack of clarity in objectives, exacerbated by frequent and costly strategic shifts and reversals.’

The livelihoods evaluation highlights the situation in Aceh, where ‘the livelihoods team struggled from the start to define a strategy’. Protracted debate on the feasibility of cash-for-work (CFW) programmes and subsequently on the relative merits of grants or loans led to delays in establishing CFW programmes by livelihoods staff. The team struggled with a lack of reference to what Oxfam’s ‘usual’ approach should be. Changing strategies and tactics and frequent changes in management staff (with changing timeframes for the response) all caused problems.

Assessments illustrated that short and frequently changing timelines did not allow Oxfam to translate its humanitarian successes into sustainable legacies, particularly where long-term structural change was involved.

The factors that contributed to weak strategic and tactical development in the livelihoods sector included:

- Short employment contracts that produced short-term thinking;
- A high turnover of staff, with changing priorities resulting in confusion amongst personnel and ‘upsetting momentum’ in implementation;
- Donor-driven planning and budget cycles creating artificial ‘annualised’ mindsets;
- A lack of sustained and strategic advisory support and weak organisational capacity.

In conclusion, successes were seen in many areas of Oxfam’s livelihoods work but, overall, the livelihoods assessment concluded that ‘Oxfam provided only a few glimpses of acting as a strategically functional organisation’. Greater guidance and support is required covering Oxfam’s livelihood strategies and how to implement them. Action needs to be taken to ensure that human resource strategies and donor management approaches do not distract from the ability to plan and implement programmes effectively.

Public health: water and sanitation

High quality, but problems of consistency

Oxfam has developed a strong reputation for its rapid response to humanitarian emergencies with water and sanitation activities. Its response to the tsunami was no different, attracting praise from the DEC for its ‘outstanding role in relation to water and sanitation across hundreds or even thousands of locations across the region’.¹⁷ The scale of Oxfam’s work was particularly impressive across the tsunami response countries, both in its direct work and in support to BRR in Aceh and other local and international NGOs.

However, with factors such as the rapid growth of the programme, pressures to spend driven by the large funds available, and uneven capacity in those carrying out the work, inconsistencies crept into the quality of programmes. Inadequate consultation with communities, poor design and poor-quality construction, and limited understanding of community dynamics were all areas where consistency in the high standards of Oxfam’s work was not always maintained.

Adequate consultation, particularly with women, is essential to ensure that latrines and bathing facilities are located so as to provide appropriate levels of security and privacy. Such consultation was often conducted by Oxfam, though this was not systematic and was often considered an optional process. At times Oxfam, or its partners, built latrines without appropriate consultation.

For example, in a programme in Tamil Nadu, ‘women’s and men’s latrines and bathing units were built facing each other and the doors did not close properly or lock, affording little privacy. Women did not use them, instead defecating in open spaces, thus increasing health and safety risks. This infrastructure was eventually demolished and rebuilt, increasing costs and inconvenience for beneficiaries.’¹⁸ This situation was partly the result of a process whereby Oxfam’s partners outsourced construction to contractors who lacked the required expertise and knowledge of appropriate Sphere standards. Such lack of consultation reflected a wider inconsistency in consultation with women across countries and programmes, with extreme differences evident between good and bad practices.

Similarly, inconsistencies were highlighted in the establishment of village public health committees, a strategy commonly used to spread public health messages and to maintain shared facilities. In Sri Lanka, programmes 'made a concerted effort to include men in public health committees and to distribute the responsibility for the maintenance of facilities ... equally'.¹⁹ Elsewhere, however, 'many of these committees had an over-representation of women, often because the traditional division of labour defined public health as a woman's role. Often these women were tasked to clean toilets and facilities for the entire community, which for many of them became an unacceptable burden'.²⁰ This in turn led to unhygienic conditions and lower rates of use.

Other recommendations from the public health review focus on improvements in the preparation and management of expansion, the use of quality control mechanisms, particularly for outsourced construction, and the need for management focus on quality over quantity.

Shelter and settlement

Oxfam has a history of supporting shelter needs in the immediate aftermath of emergencies through the distribution of plastic sheeting, tents and, in some cases, the construction of temporary shelters. Shelter needs following the tsunami were enormous, ranging from the provision of immediate shelters, through building temporary or transitional housing, to the construction of thousands of permanent houses for people made homeless. See Chapter 1 for details of the response.

Oxfam and its partners supported shelter provision across the main response countries and played a significant role in advocating with district and national governments for the provision of housing and land title deeds for marginalised people and for improvements in the conditions of temporary shelters (for further details see the Advocacy section below.)

In common with much of the humanitarian sector, Oxfam had little experience of building permanent houses prior to the tsunami disaster. With ample funds available, the organisation decided to work to meet the needs of communities who prioritised shelter over other forms of assistance. In Aceh and India, this decision translated either into the construction of permanent houses directly or partnering with other agencies to build housing. In

Sri Lanka, differences in approach led to some Oxfam affiliates engaging in housing construction while others limited their involvement to the development of pilot housing.

Quality issues: were shelters appropriate?

Oxfam suffered some problems with the quality of construction. In some cases communities rejected housing due to quality issues,²¹ or remedial work was needed to improve quality;²² this reflected problems faced by many other INGOs. Evolving housing policies in Aceh added to the confusion: for example, when BRR shifted its reconstruction policy from transitional to permanent housing, a number of temporary houses, built partly in brick and partly in timber, had to be demolished before being rebuilt fully in brick.

Given the challenges that Oxfam and its partners faced in permanent shelter construction, as well as its limited experience, many people questioned the wisdom of engaging in permanent shelter construction, preferring instead to channel funds to other, more experienced agencies. There is no clear consensus on this issue from the tsunami evaluation. There were examples where the sub-contracting of permanent housing was used successfully to overcome problems with Oxfam's programmes. For example, in Aceh Oxfam handed over construction to international organisations CHF and AIPRD (respectively, a US-based INGO and an Australian government scheme), to overcome problems with its own community self-build approach.

On the other hand, there were examples such as Oxfam's community-based shelter programme in Sri Lanka which proved to be very successful; this programme was praised for its high levels of community participation and empowerment. Its success was likely to be partially the result of Oxfam's long-term relationship with the communities involved, something that would be difficult for an external contractor to replicate. These divergent examples highlight the complex interplay of factors such as the history of an affiliate in the affected communities, which contributed to a successful outcome.

Key internal findings

Across the tsunami-affected region, OI affiliates and their partners undertook substantial shelter and settlement work in different phases of the response, with mixed outcomes. The immediate impression is that overall a more consistent and perhaps higher output could have been achieved, and that this could have been



A mason laying bricks to complete a washroom at a semi-permanent home built with assistance from Oxfam in Deah Baru village, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam



Oxfam staff and labourers help to construct an Oxfam T11 water tank in CTB camp, Kinniya, Trincomalee District, eastern Sri Lanka. Previously water was provided to approximately 128 families from five small tanks around the camp, but this 11,000 cubic metre tank will provide water to tap stands, making life easier for people living there. Credit: Tori Ray/Oxfam

feasible even given the unprecedented scale of the disaster and Oxfam's relatively thin previous experience in the shelter sector.²³

The shelter evaluation noted that 'there was a high degree of satisfaction reported from several affiliates' managers from the field; that good shelter work had been achieved in the face of very considerable odds'. However, it added, 'if Oxfam foresees any need to engage significantly in shelter in the future, it should urgently consider establishing a corporate mechanism to hold established knowledge; set standards and guidelines; and work to codify decision-making processes consonant with the specific needs of the sector'.

Working with others: partners and partnerships

In its tsunami response, Oxfam worked alongside over 170 partner organisations – including small community organisations, national NGOs, and international NGOs – to implement a wide variety of relief, rehabilitation, and recovery activities. In Aceh alone, it worked with over 100 local and international partner organisations. Many of the hundreds of organisations that rushed to the areas affected by the tsunami also required local partners to work with or through. Such an unprecedented situation led to competition between NGOs to form partnerships with the best of the local and national organisations. With partnerships came pressures to expand, and relatively small local and national NGOs came under considerable pressure to scale up in order to be able to carry out activities that matched the scope of the huge funds held by international agencies.

In addition to the relief work that local and national organisations carried out with or on behalf of organisations such as Oxfam, the tsunami had significant impacts on these civil society organisations themselves. As part of its operations, Oxfam supported a high level of capacity-building in its partner organisations, with the objective of building future emergency response capabilities.

Diversity of approach

Within the Oxfam confederation, each affiliate has a degree of independence and differs in approach when it comes to working with other organisations. Oxfam affiliates such as Oxfam Novib generally choose to concentrate on a small number of experienced

national or in some cases international partners (such as BRAC and Wetlands International), while affiliates such as Oxfam Australia typically select relatively small, local partner organisations. The style of partnership also varies widely, ranging across closely supportive and collaborative partnerships, partnerships based mainly on funding, and contractual-style partnerships (typical in construction activities).

The diversity of approaches between different parts of Oxfam International at times caused problems for its partners. In several cases local organisations were partnered with several different Oxfam affiliates simultaneously, requiring different approaches, ways of working, and reporting formats. In cases where one affiliate phased out its involvement, handing over the partnership to another affiliate, partners reported considerable problems in adapting to the ways of working of the new affiliate.²⁴

The diversity of partnership approaches across the confederation provides Oxfam with an opportunity to pick and choose its approach in response to the situations it encounters; however, such cross-affiliate collaboration was rarely seen in the tsunami response.

Are partners better able to respond to emergencies now than before?

Almost all partner organisations that were questioned on the subject indicated that their partnership with Oxfam had improved the managerial and technical capacities of their organisation. This was achieved as a result of learning-by-doing, by training, by secondments (of Oxfam, partner, or external staff, which proved to be particularly effective), and other forms of support provided by Oxfam.²⁵ Some notable examples included Oxfam's work with Indian partner Dhan Foundation, to develop contingency plans for future emergencies.

Some partnerships, such as that with Metta in Myanmar, have developed progressively. Metta responded first to destruction caused by the tsunami in the Ayeyarwady delta region, and then in 2008 to further destruction following Cyclone Nargis.

Effective partnerships

In general, pre-established partnerships with organisations that have strong community links have proved to be considerably more effective than new partnerships formed when an emergency hits. However, these pre-existing partnerships must be reassessed in light of the skills and capacity required for the emergency response and the sophistication of systems required in line with the scale of funding.

Oxfam looks for a wide range of skills and experience in the partners that it works with. However, in the tsunami response, skills in gender-sensitive programming, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and other issues which Oxfam considers to be key approaches to its humanitarian work were often not found in contractors. Greater support is needed for technical contractor organisations to fulfil the wider range of Oxfam's requirements for good programming.

Similarly, to ensure consistency in the quality of response and to enable minimum standards to be met, Oxfam needs to ensure that it has enough capacity itself to provide adequate support to partners. For further discussions of partnerships, see the Partners and Partnership Review and relevant sections in, for example, the Livelihoods Review.

Issues of gender

Consistency: highlights and issues

'For an organisation that places such an emphasis on gender justice, the quality of gender integration into the tsunami response of Oxfam and its partners was highly variable and inconsistent in the support provided, programme outcomes, and effectiveness. There was some excellent work where skilled staff implemented innovative and successful gendered programmes. However, equally there were programmes that failed to address gender at all.'²⁶

The most consistently noted gender outcomes of Oxfam's tsunami response related to women's increased sense of empowerment, voice in the community, and involvement in community decision-making processes. These came about primarily through the processes of consulting with and involving women.

One of the most positive examples of gender-sensitive programming was seen in Sri Lanka, where Oxfam and other agencies supported

the creation of the Women's Coalition for Disaster Management (WCDM), a network of 20 local and international organisations and community-based women's groups. WCDM held a regular forum with women representatives from camp committees and agencies such as INGOs and the UN. As a formal process it allowed regular dialogue and accountability. This simple model was very well received by both the community and by participating agencies, and established a direct line of communication between women and those in a position to act. WCDM was established within a month of the tsunami disaster and demonstrated engagement with women in the earliest stages of the response, to ensure that their needs were met.

In Aceh, Oxfam had a strong advocacy programme that commissioned research and engaged in a range of initiatives related to women's land rights, settlement conditions, and other shelter issues. Most notable was research into women's rights to land and housing, which influenced the Aceh reconstruction agency BRR's policy of providing joint land titles to women and men.

Increased income opportunities, skills, and ability to engage in the commercial sector made a significant difference for many women and their families. Increased incomes have meant better nutrition levels for families, more girls attending school and, for many women, more decision-making power within the family.

Challenges

However, achievements were not consistent across programmes and partners. In livelihoods programmes, small-scale enterprise development 'predominantly locked women into low-paying, low-status occupations'.

In all its work, Oxfam aspired to – and in many cases achieved – high standards. However, there were many occasions (particularly in the early phase of the response) when Oxfam and its partners did not systematically consult and involve women in its activities, resulting in, for example, latrines remaining unused, as noted above. There were extreme differences in good and bad practices in consulting and involving women across countries and different activities. Consultation with women was often seen as an additional or optional activity that occurred through the lead of an individual, rather than as an integrated and institutionalised way of working within the organisation.



Rajamma, 70, lives alone in a temporary shelter in Madavamedu village, Nagapattinam district. "I dry fish to give my neighbors. They give me food each day but I have nothing to give in return. This is all I can give. I don't know when I will go to a permanent home but until then, I will live here." Oxfam Partner Sevai is providing water and sanitation facilities and conducting health and hygiene activities for the more than 50 families who live in this temporary shelter location. Credit: Marie Banu Jawahar/Oxfam



Anjali carrying a child, Karunagapally, Kollam. Credit: Rajendra Shaw/Oxfam

The large scale-up required by the tsunami response was a significant challenge as there was a global shortage of experienced staff. Experience in gender mainstreaming, and indeed in a range of so-called 'soft' skills, was highly variable throughout Oxfam's response; there were examples of innovative work by skilled practitioners, but there was an overall shortage of capacity to deliver gendered programming across the response. It was felt that the skill sets of many newly recruited staff were overly dominated by 'hard' technical skills.²⁷

Rhetoric and reality

Oxfam is committed in its strategies to mainstreaming gender, and provided resources to integrate gender into its tsunami response. This produced some compelling results, with many women gaining in confidence, asserting their rights, earning higher incomes, and playing a more active role in their communities. However, 'OI fell far short of truly mainstreaming or institutionalising gender across its response'. There were insufficiently consistent skills, experience, and management emphasis to integrate gender in a consistent way. As an organisation that places such a high priority on gender, Oxfam's effectiveness in the tsunami response fell below its stated commitment: there was a clear gap between the rhetoric and the reality. Oxfam failed to address this in a systematic way throughout its response hierarchy.

Of the activities directly implemented by Oxfam, those that had the greatest impact on promoting gender equity shared a number of key features: country programmes with an existing focus on working with women, programmes with key staff with skills and experience in gender, and programmes where senior managers placed a high priority on gender and pushed this through the line. With partners, the most effective programmes occurred where partners were experienced in community engagement and gender mainstreaming – more so if they had a prior relationship with Oxfam, had received capacity-building support, and had a strong and trusted working relationship. However, even new partners benefited from close working relationships with Oxfam.

Advocacy on humanitarian issues

Advocating with local and national governments, and in the international community, plays a large part in Oxfam's work. In the tsunami response, Oxfam and its partners attained some notable

successes (such as in the provision of housing and land ownership) in advocating for pro-poor policies and practices with district and national governments and with national reconstruction agencies. These activities resulted in real benefits for poor and marginalised people. A number of examples are given in Chapter 1. As the review of advocacy initiatives reported, 'Oxfam's [and its partners'] advocacy activity across the tsunami response was significant and in extremely challenging circumstances achieved considerable impacts. Staff at all levels were committed and determined in their efforts on behalf of poor people affected by the tsunami.'²⁸

Successes were achieved despite organisational weaknesses, 'particularly in the co-ordination and communication of a strategic approach [to advocacy in the tsunami response countries]' and in the organisational support provided for national-level advocacy initiatives. Weaknesses identified included limited understanding of advocacy by field staff, particularly during the emergency phase; low levels of awareness of advocacy tools and guidance available on the OI intranet; inadequate articulation and communication of advocacy objectives; and insufficient communication between general staff and advocacy specialists.

Issues of accountability

Oxfam has committed itself to be an accountable organisation – to be accountable to its beneficiaries, to be accountable between members of the confederation and with its partners, and to be accountable to the millions of people and the institutions who donated money to the tsunami response.

Accountability to communities and beneficiaries

The evaluation of accountability to communities and beneficiaries reviewed the work of Oxfam and its partners against the criteria of participation, appropriate targeting, transparency and communication, monitoring and evaluation, and institutionalisation of accountability. Against these criteria, Oxfam was seen to have 'ensured reasonable accountability in its tsunami response'.²⁹ In practice this meant that the level of accountability to beneficiaries varied across the response sectors and countries.

Some programmes were praised for their 'unique' empowerment processes, such as Oxfam's shelter work in Sri Lanka, strong participatory work by partners in Myanmar, programmes in Thailand that focused on some of the most marginalised Burmese

migrants, and the multi-country Green Coast programme, which was 'built on local capacities and quite often strengthened women's groups'. Though Oxfam's response was not always based on a thorough analysis of vulnerability, nevertheless it was able to largely address sections of the most marginalised and left-out communities affected by the tsunami. The targeting in most cases was decided based on consensus with community-based organisations, local government institutions, and other key actors.

Working with partner organisations that have strong links with communities and participatory ways of working generally proved to be a very good strategy. Partner structures that facilitated communities' rights to information improved the accountability of Oxfam operations.

Where Oxfam did less well was in providing support to its staff on the practical ways of implementing accountability measures, and supporting partners to do the same. At times Oxfam (and its partners) did not put in place, for example, formal complaint systems and at times used inappropriate measures such as installing complaint boxes in villages in Indonesia and India, in a culture 'which prefers face-to-face meetings as the main mode of communication'. On the other hand, good practices were noted, for example in Sigli in Aceh, where Oxfam engaged the community in decision-making and used story-telling, posters, and pictures to inform local communities and institutions about its exit from the intervention.

The evaluations illustrate that 'working with long-established partners with strong community ties, where the partnership relationships have been established prior to the emergency, is a key factor in ensuring accountability to communities'.³⁰

Corporate accountability

To what extent was Oxfam accountable as an international humanitarian organisation? OI aimed to achieve a very high level of accountability for the 2004 tsunami response, by establishing a number of unprecedented processes and structures. These included the creation of a separate charity with its own governance, management, and reporting structures (the Oxfam International Tsunami Fund); a very high level (90 per cent) of external audit requirements for programme expenditure; the public reporting of consolidated global financial and narrative information on a quarterly basis; the requirement for consolidated country planning

and reporting; a triple project approval process at affiliate, country, and Tsunami Fund Management Team (TFMT) level; the creation of a central pooled fund; a dedicated OI monitoring and evaluation team with country representatives; the commissioning of a comprehensive final evaluation as well as separate country evaluations in 2005/06; and plans for long-term evaluation work to 2012.

The overall conclusion was that in general the high accountability target was reached. The global strategy was followed and the principles set out at the beginning of the response were upheld. This did not exclude some flexibility in the way that the strategy was applied in the light of changing circumstances. Mutual accountability between affiliates was promoted and upheld in the governing bodies of the Fund: the board, the TFMT, and the audit committee. At the country level, however, more work was needed to promote the integration of Oxfam affiliates in humanitarian response and to develop a culture of trust and openness.

Financial accountability was promoted by both the external statutory reporting of the Fund and the internal reporting that was required of all affiliates. In addition the audit compliance requirements, by which 90 per cent of programme spend was required to be externally audited, provided assurance on the accountable use of funds. The response to the three main incidents of fraud and corruption which occurred were appropriate and responsible, although they differed according to circumstances. High levels of transparency and accountability were maintained in external and media communications throughout the response.

'Big money': the effects of large funds

Did the sheer volume of funding received during the tsunami response inhibit Oxfam's ability to redesign and programme in line with its values and programming principles? Should Oxfam have taken so much money in the first place?

Disproportionate funding

The public response to the tsunami resulted in unprecedented funds for the humanitarian community and for organisations such as Oxfam. As the Tsunami Evaluation Committee (TEC) reported, the UK's Disasters Emergency Committee appeal 'broke the world record for on-line giving, with the public donating over \$20.5m in 24 hours'.³¹



The women in Leelawathi Hewawisenth's community make coir from rope coconut husks to earn a living for their families. The pits in which the husks are soaked were flooded by the tsunami, but Oxfam has paid the women an income to rehabilitate their pits and restart the coir production process. Credit: Tori Ray/Oxfam



Almost the whole of the Banda Aceh fishing fleet was destroyed as the tsunami rushed up the river into the city, carrying with it most of the anchored trawlers and crushing them against the first bridge. Only boats that were out at sea survived. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

Oxfam's experience mirrored that of the wider NGO community, where funds received per person affected by the disaster vastly outstripped funds received for other emergencies. As the TEC evaluation pointed out: 'The tsunami highlighted the arbitrary nature of the current funding system for humanitarian emergencies. This system produces an uneven and inequitable flow of funds for emergencies that encourages neither investment in capacity nor responses that are proportionate to need. Despite some donors' commitment to the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD), donors often took funding decisions based on political calculation and media pressure. The total funding for the nearly two million people affected by the tsunami was \$13.5 billion, or over \$7,000 per person. This compares with \$3 per person for the 36 million affected by floods in Bangladesh in 2004.'³²

Pressures to spend funds

A review of operations by Oxfam and its partners in Aceh and Sri Lanka revealed competing views. In Aceh it was found that the high level of funding 'inhibited Oxfam's ability to redesign and programme in line with its values and programming principles. The money enabled staff to "think big". Oxfam quickly grasped the opportunity to respond to needs, offer a range of options, inject large amounts of cash into the economy and take on the kind of infrastructural work that it would not normally be able to afford. ... Unfettered by budget constraints, the ability to say yes also led to over-expansion during 2005 and a loss of focus and control.'³³

To compensate, programmes in Aceh were scaled back in 2006, causing tensions between communities and Oxfam. Contraction led some programmes to cut existing commitments, with inevitable consequences: 'Communities have concluded that Oxfam staff are corrupt. ... Signs have been written telling Oxfam to go home; Oxfam t-shirts are being burned in protest.'³⁴

In contrast, in Sri Lanka, the second largest focus of response after Aceh, it was found that the pressure associated with large amounts of funding settled down within a period of approximately three months. 'In the first three months, as there was uncertainty surrounding how the Sri Lanka programme would spend this money, pressure to spend was very high, and the programme delivery suffered as a result. However, after three months, Oxfam GB Sri Lanka was told that they could use this money for a period of up to four years. As soon as systems were put in place to manage the money, staff were relieved of the initial pressure of controlling money flows.'³⁵

The analysis went on to reflect on differences that might have played a part. The Sri Lanka response was characterised by a longer-term mindset, with response programmes built on the experience of Oxfam staff over a number of years and a recognition that development work (as opposed to emergency relief) would be part of the programme, which operated alongside long-term conflict-related activities. In contrast, Oxfam had left Aceh in 2004, returning after the tsunami with a large influx of emergency-orientated staff. This topic is discussed further in the section 'Short-term vs. long-term thinking' in Chapter 3.

Working in areas outside our expertise

The large funds allowed Oxfam to work in areas in which it had little previous experience, particularly in the construction of permanent housing and in the substantial participatory action research and DRR programme conducted in Sri Lanka and India. Should Oxfam have taken money and used it in this way? Would it have been better not to take the funds, or to channel them to other agencies with greater experience in these areas? As discussed in Chapter 2, the tsunami response provided contrasting examples. Oxfam channelled funds to more experienced organisations to overcome limitations with its own housing programme in Aceh, whereas in Sri Lanka housing construction by Oxfam and its local partners proved effective.

In the absence of an overall shelter policy, different stances were taken by Oxfam affiliates. Reflecting on the NGO's experience in Aceh, an internal Oxfam GB review recommended that: 'We should only accept funding for phase 2/3 rehabilitation and recovery when it matches beneficiary needs and Oxfam's ability to deliver through its own competencies... In future, especially now that we [Oxfam GB] have defined our policy on shelter, it is unlikely that we would be able to spend funds at the Tsunami level matched with our core competencies. Our revised shelter policy is now clear that we should not engage in construction ourselves.'³⁶

While other affiliates may not carry out construction activities in future emergencies due to lower levels of funding, the possibility of involvement in construction was not ruled out. The situation has been muddled further by the variety of different ways in which Oxfam could 'engage' in construction with others – purely by channelling funds, through sub-contracting, or through arm's-length or collaborative partnerships.

Diverting funds to other emergencies

Where the exceptionally high level of funds caused concerns, strategies that diverted income to other humanitarian responses, with the consent of donors, were preferable to the early closure of fundraising appeals. Oxfam America took a different fundraising strategy from many Oxfam affiliates, closing its initial tsunami appeal relatively quickly and launching a second appeal that included a clause allowing funds to be used for other humanitarian responses. Affiliates which raise funds mainly through joint agency appeals – such as Oxfam GB’s joint DEC appeal – are more restricted and find it difficult to halt fundraising if joint appeals are still in progress.

Concerns exist over the overall funding cycle, as expressed by the TEC and others: the cycle of disasters, i.e. fundraising appeals followed by response, does not suit the long-term development of emergency response capacities in Oxfam and its partners, nor support long-term measures to reduce the risks associated with disasters. Key recommendations highlighted by the tsunami evaluation need to be addressed outside of individual emergency responses and the funding that they generate.

‘Build back better’ and ‘reconstruction plus’

Not satisfied with replacing physical assets such as houses and fishing boats, Oxfam’s tsunami response aimed instead to alter the long-term condition of poor and marginalised people. Oxfam adopted the motto ‘reconstruction plus’, reflecting the slogan ‘build back better’ popular in the international community, but with emphasis on changing the status of those who lived in poverty and those who were marginalised in society: ‘Reconstruction must do more than recreate the poverty that existed before the tsunami. It must aim for “reconstruction plus”, specifically aiming to reduce poverty, ensure environmental sustainability, and reduce vulnerability to future disasters.’³⁷

Did we ‘build back better’; did we live up to the ‘reconstruct plus’ slogan?

Oxfam was, to some extent, able to ‘do more than recreate the poverty that existed before the tsunami’. Targeting assistance to the poorest and most marginalised people, improvements in women’s

empowerment, and improved capacities of local partners were all examples where Oxfam’s work went beyond returning society to its pre-tsunami state. However, income gains for women and improvements in DRR were limited in scope.

Programmes that assisted the poorest and most marginalised people

The majority of Oxfam’s response was able to address sections of the most marginalised communities affected by the tsunami. Oxfam and its partners worked with tsunami-affected fisher folk in marine and inland fishing, farmers, dalits, tribal people, agricultural labourers, collectors of crabs, mussels, oysters, and seaweed, wage labourers, migrants, vendors, renters, squatters, landless people, and women and children in the most inaccessible tsunami-affected areas. The targeting in most cases was decided based on consensus with community-based organisations, local government institutions, and other key actors.

In the Indonesia shelter programme, the country team decided to focus its efforts on vulnerable groups such as renters and squatters who, due to their landless status, were likely to be left out of housing assistance programmes. An advocacy initiative resulted in the Aceh reconstruction agency BRR introducing policies that ensured housing for renters and squatters. Another advocacy initiative supported the provision of land and housing title deeds to women as well as men (instead of traditional sole male ownership of such assets). Both of these initiatives helped to change the status quo and operated in contrast to e.g. asset replacement activities, which tended to replace housing only for those who had previously owned a house.

Following the principle of ‘do no harm’, support was provided within the tsunami-affected areas, or affected populations, to communities and individuals who had been indirectly affected by the tsunami and who might be relatively disadvantaged by support to others. For example, in the Sri Lanka shelter programme, low-cost housing was provided for ‘poorest of the poor’ community members in the tsunami-affected areas, who had not lost their housing in the disaster but who were in danger of becoming even more marginalised because of the support given to other community members.



Builders working on the site Oxfam funded, through their partner Educational International, the rebuilding of Shariputra school in Ahangama near Galle, which was severely damaged by the Tsunami. The school is one of eight Oxfam are repairing/rebuilding in Sri Lanka, this one has 1340 students aged 5-18 who were being taught in temporary (UNICEF) shelters until the school reconstruction was completed in December 2006. Credit: Howard Davies/Oxfam



Parvathy, 50, helps to build Oxfam temporary shelters to house people left homeless after the Tsunami. Wherever possible communities are trained to assist in the rebuilding, including the training of women as carpenters. Vinayapuram village, Thirukkivil, near Ampara, Sri Lanka. Credit: Jerry Galea/Oxfam

Increases in partners' capacities

Partner organisations improved their capacity both through the experience of the response and through the large number of training and other capacity-building initiatives undertaken. Many partner organisations expanded in size during the tsunami response. There is evidence that the rapid growth of some partners has only partially receded since, and that capacity enhanced by the tsunami response has allowed partners (e.g. Indian partner Dhan Foundation) to access other funds.

Livelihood incomes and empowerment of women

Livelihoods initiatives led to income gains for many women. 'In general, many women did increase their income from pre-tsunami levels. Often this benefited their families; the extra money was spent on purchasing food for the family, sending children, particularly girls, to school, and on improving household amenities.'³⁸ However, gains in income were limited as 'Oxfam's strategies focused mainly on restoring income-generating activities that were low-skilled and distress-driven, and for which wage rates and returns on investment were low'.³⁹ The most consistently noted gender outcomes of Oxfam's tsunami response related to women's increased sense of empowerment, voice in the community, and involvement in community decision-making processes. This was not related to any specific project intervention, but came about primarily through the processes of consulting with and involving women.

Reducing future risks

To what extent did Oxfam's programmes reduce vulnerabilities to future disaster? A small number of its tsunami programmes tackled disaster risk reduction (DRR) issues head on – notably the PRIME programme active across Indonesia,⁴⁰ the Green Coast multi-country programme, support to government strategy development in Sri Lanka, and support for DRR centres in Sri Lanka and India through the Oxfam America DRR and research programme. However, in the majority of Oxfam's responses, DRR measures and strategies were not integrated in a strong manner. The consultant conducting this review took a very strong line that Oxfam, in the majority of cases, did not prioritise or implement the wide-ranging DRR programmes required to reduce future risk, of any significant magnitude, that could be faced by the tsunami-affected communities.

The importance of DRR measures was highlighted in the tsunami evaluation report prepared by the influential Tsunami Evaluation Coalition. Jan Egeland, the Emergency Relief Coordinator of the UN agency OCHA, noted at the launch of the report: 'Disasters are taking an increasing toll in the future. Therefore, all actors should strive to increase disaster risk reduction and preparedness at community, national and international levels.'⁴¹ This is certainly a call that holds true for Oxfam.

The Oxfam International Tsunami Fund: a new charity

In response to the need for the highest levels of accountability and for centralised management of the huge funds generated by tsunami fundraising appeals, Oxfam established a separate charity, the Oxfam International Tsunami Fund (OITF). This fund was set up in the first few months after the tsunami hit and went on to provide high-level management and co-ordination to the confederation's tsunami programming through to its closure in 2009. The charity consisted of a board, audit committee, and management team, made up of key Oxfam affiliate board members and senior managers.

The evaluations revealed competing views on the value of the Tsunami Fund as a separate charity, but there was general agreement that a centralised management team was needed to co-ordinate and manage the response across the confederation in such an exceptional emergency. There was also agreement that Oxfam must both prepare for a similar exceptional emergency to take place in the future, through the development of a 'robust super-emergency stand-by plan ... ready to be put into action',⁴² and that it must strengthen the capacities of country emergency response structures as the core of its response strategies.

Chapter 3

Reflections and Recommendations: Key Strategic Issues for Oxfam



Strategic collaboration and co-ordination across the confederation

“It is easier for affiliates to work with local organisations on a bilateral basis than laterally with other affiliates... Each affiliate had established primary channels for supporting partnerships with local organisations, but had lower capacity to engage, and learn from, [other] affiliates.”⁴³

The lack of collaboration between affiliates was highlighted as a factor responsible for sub-optimal programming, limiting the exchange of ideas, experience, and skills and restricting the extent to which lessons were learned from the programmes of other affiliates. In many cases staff from different Oxfam affiliates, based in their own offices in the same city, rarely spoke to each other, let alone worked together on similar programmes or provided complementarities between organisations. There were exceptions where cross-affiliate collaboration took place, for example in advocacy initiatives, models for cross-affiliate funding, and cross-affiliate funding models that included monitoring roles, but examples of strategic collaboration at the country level were few and far between.

There is much to be gained from greater collaboration between affiliates. For example, during a period of partner reassessment in India, Oxfam Australia realised that its own tools were inadequate for assessing partnerships that involved very large amounts of funding. Oxfam Novib routinely works with large-scale partners, with relatively large-scale funding, and this is reflected in its partner assessment tools. Subsequently Oxfam Australia borrowed the more appropriate tools from Oxfam Novib to assess its Indian partners.

There are considerable differences in approach across the Oxfam confederation; each affiliate has its own approaches and associated strengths. Differing approaches are found on issues such as the extent to which expatriate staff are used and in what context, and the types of partnership that are entered into, ranging from partnerships with small local organisations to large international players and contractual-style partnerships. Improved strategic collaboration across the organisation will help to ensure that for Oxfam the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Photo opposite: Oxfam staff and labourers help to construct an Oxfam T11 water tank in CTB camp, Kinniya, Trincomalee District, eastern Sri Lanka. Previously water was provided to approximately 128 families from five small tanks around the camp, but this 11,000 cubic metre tank will provide water to tap stands, making life easier for people living there. Credit: Tori Ray/Oxfam

The evaluation has highlighted many areas where strategic collaboration between affiliates did not take place, resulting in difficulties for Oxfam staff and partners. In a response country these included collaboration in needs assessment, collaboration in sharing assessment findings across sectors and affiliates, liaising with national/local governments, and collaboration to ensure consistency of technical approach (e.g. in type of latrines constructed). More generally, in many areas across the tsunami response, more collaboration was needed on quality standards, good practice tools, and guidelines.

A few further examples are given below.

Partnerships

With each affiliate operating with different approaches and systems, partners can suffer the consequences of OI's lack of strategic co-ordination. In a number of cases, local partners were partnered with several different Oxfam affiliates, each requiring different approaches, ways of working, and reporting formats. Although the TFMT agreed after a few months to adopt the principle of 'one partner, one Oxfam', this does not appear to have been followed through in the response countries. In cases where one affiliate phased out its involvement, handing the partnership over to another affiliate, partners reported considerable problems in adapting to the new affiliate's ways of working.

Salary scales and redundancy packages

Differences in salary scales and redundancy packages across affiliates have caused conflict between Oxfam staff teams. The livelihoods evaluation report states: 'Different affiliates established different salary scales... [with] a clear correlation between tsunami funds raised by affiliates and the salary scales they offered... salary scales tended to confer proxy status and accordingly implicit influence... Affiliates providing lower salary scales often felt dominated by those paying higher salary scales and perceived the latter as arrogant. The result was disastrous as it took a toll on co-ordination.'⁴⁴ Similarly there was little strategic collaboration on redundancy packages between affiliates, with some adding discretionary elements on top of each country's statutory redundancy entitlement.

Collaboration across countries

Overall, cross-country transfer of knowledge, experience, and learning proved to be very weak, leading to duplication of effort and missed opportunities.

Strategic and operational preparedness

The need for Oxfam to improve its strategic and operational preparedness is a recurring issue in many of the evaluation studies. The experience of the tsunami has highlighted weaknesses in preparedness, including the definition of strategies, development of operational plans or guiding principles, tools, practical guidance, and knowledge bases. The solutions to these weaknesses are characterised as being cross-affiliate and at the levels of response country, affiliate HQs, and Oxfam International.

Many of the points discussed in the section on strategic collaboration above are issues of preparedness – for example, collaboration in the development of:

- Strategies, operational plans, or guiding principles;
- Minimum standards and guidance notes on how to meet these standards;
- Institutional knowledge and human capacity in dedicated humanitarian staff, their skill sets, and availability through effective relief registers.

Several areas for improved preparedness have been identified through these studies, including the need to build strong inter-affiliate relationships during lulls between emergencies, pre-establishing partnerships for emergency response, and preparing governance and management processes to respond to similar exceptional emergencies in the future. Building strong inter-affiliate relationships in the lulls between emergencies is seen as key to ensuring that the relationships between affiliate staff will withstand the increased pressures (to respond quickly, to spend funds, in media communication) of an emergency response.

Experience has shown that, in general, pre-established partnerships with organisations that have strong community links are more effective, and accountable, in disaster response, than



An Indonesian military helicopter lands on the road just 7 kms from Banda Aceh town, an area with a good road link to the town. An unnamed boy carries a box of food away from the helicopter to residents of a village near Banda Aceh who have lost everything. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam



Oxfam staff and villagers meeting with the bupati, or district head, at a camp for displaced people from the villages of Pase and Meunasah Lhok in the sub-district of Lhoong, Aceh. Oxfam is supporting the villagers in their request for government assistance in procuring land, as their own land is now permanently inundated. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

new partnerships formed once an emergency strikes. Reassessment of existing partners is needed to ensure ongoing suitability. Oxfam needs to effectively pre-position partnerships for likely country responses, and needs to identify the assessment tools that it will use with its existing partners to gauge whether their systems and procedures are suitable for the level of funding that might be provided.

The review of the structures put in place during the tsunami response recommends the formulation of a ‘robust “super-emergency” stand-by plan ... ready to be put into action’⁴⁵ in preparation for a future emergency on the scale of the tsunami. It recommends that the stand-by plan builds on the tsunami model of a centralised management team and includes the strengthening of co-ordination mechanisms between country affiliates. See further notes under ‘Current and future developments’ in Chapter 4 below.

Short-term vs. long-term thinking

Oxfam’s experience varied across the tsunami response countries; in some, high staff turnover and short-term contracting were highlighted as factors limiting the effectiveness of country teams. Feedback from staff highlights that the high turnover of managerial staff produced ‘short-term thinking, changing priorities, changing timeframes for the response, all leading to confusion in staff and upsetting the implementation momentum’.⁴⁶ A high turnover of managerial staff hindered common understanding and strategies tended to change as frequently as senior managers. This finding was reflected in the conclusion of the broader evaluation of the tsunami response conducted by DEC, which found that ‘The most effective agencies were those that moved their staffing structures to long-term contracts at an early stage.’⁴⁷

In contrast with this experience, analysis from Oxfam’s programmes in Sri Lanka points to the contribution made by long-term thinking and planning in providing consistency of approach, stability, and effectiveness in the overall management of the country response: for example, in planning for the closure of programmes and for the transition from the relief phase to rehabilitation and recovery phases.

Improved support to front-line staff/bridging the gap

Gaps between OI/affiliate HQs and field: strategies, guidance, and communication

The experience of the tsunami demonstrates the gap between the development of guidelines, tools, minimum standards, strategies, and policies at OI or affiliate HQ level and the knowledge, skill sets, and awareness of front-line staff in Oxfam’s response.

The evaluation studies have highlighted many areas where either:

- OI or affiliate policies or strategies are missing but needed;
- The documents available to field staff do not include the practical guidance that is needed to support staff to successfully implement the guidance/policy/strategies;
- Communication and knowledge transfer of policies, strategies, tools, guidance, and best practice between affiliate HQs or OI groups to people actually managing and implementing programmes on the ground is very weak.

These gaps were evident in different ways, for example:

In the area of Oxfam’s accountability to its beneficiaries: while the intent of Oxfam’s accountability policy was well understood, ‘major gaps were witnessed in practical ways of ensuring accountability of response e.g. operational integration of the policy and principles in terms of clearly stated activities in the work plans (with budget) ... The accountability principles were not translated into local languages and checklists have not been developed for field use except in Sri Lanka where this was done to some extent’.⁴⁸ Similarly, in the areas of monitoring and evaluation what was needed was ‘an “operational plan” to convert the [M&E] framework into something practical’.⁴⁹

On issues of advocacy, while Oxfam GB’s advocacy toolkit had been adopted by the OI Tsunami Advocacy Coordination Team (TACT) and the Humanitarian Accountability Coordination Team (HACT), and complemented by documents on Oxfam’s intranet, knowledge and awareness of these guidelines and tools were missing in some countries. One country director reported a complete unavailability, or lack of awareness, of supporting guidelines when developing local advocacy initiatives.

Some problems were exacerbated by the influx of large numbers of new and often inexperienced staff, particularly in Aceh where the expansion was greatest. For both new and existing staff there were issues:

In livelihoods programmes: 'The livelihoods team struggled from the start to define a strategy. Protracted debate on the feasibility of cash for work (CFW) and subsequently on the relative merits of grants or loans led to a situation in which, ironically, the first CFW programme was initiated by non-livelihoods staff. The team struggled with a lack of reference to what Oxfam's "usual" approach should be.'⁵⁰

On gender issues: 'It was often assumed that the plans and policies, including gender mainstreaming, were being carried out in the field. This was not necessarily the case.'⁵¹ While much training was conducted, the gender evaluation highlights the lack of skills and experience in newly recruited staff as an important factor contributing to this problem.

The tsunami experience has highlighted the real impacts that certain factors have on Oxfam's field staff and on their ability to deliver quality programmes. These include:

- Confusion about strategies and policies;
- Lack of knowledge of how to practically implement frameworks, strategies, etc.;
- Little knowledge of supporting guidance and tools.

All of these factors have had negative consequences for Oxfam's primary clients as an organisation – the poor and marginalised citizens caught up in humanitarian emergencies, who are affected by:

- Delays in delivery, as field staff debate the relative merits of food-for-work or cash-for-work programmes, look for guidance to design advocacy survey tools, or start from scratch themselves;
- Programmes that are not appropriate or that are implemented with poor quality;
- Not having the ability to hold Oxfam to account at the local level because Oxfam staff have not implemented the measures needed to make this possible.

While it is recognised that the tsunami was an exceptional emergency and that there was a large influx of new staff into programmes, long-established Oxfam staff also suffered from the same problems, and are likely to suffer from them again in future emergencies if Oxfam does not act to bridge such gaps.

Suggestions to bridge gaps of this nature include the following:

- Dramatically improve internal communication and knowledge transfer between Oxfam International and affiliate HQs and field staff to include policies, strategies, guidance, and tools developed at the OI or affiliate HQ level;
- Ensure that policies and strategies are matched with practical guidance covering implementation;
- Systematically strengthen staff induction and training processes;
- Conduct regular assessments of field staff awareness and knowledge and use of appropriate tools and guidelines.

Striving for consistency in response quality

In the response of Oxfam and its partners to the tsunami, the evaluations found some excellent practice driven by dedicated, skilful, and experienced staff and praised by others in the humanitarian community. However, they also found a high degree of inconsistency across the organisation and response countries, with examples of poor-quality work that was not based on Oxfam's (or the humanitarian community's) collective knowledge of best practice. One of the greatest challenges in Oxfam's work in future is to ensure consistency in the quality of its humanitarian response.



Azida with a group of children, some of them hers and two of them recent orphans. Azida and her entire family were picked up by the wave as it destroyed their home and thrown across a nearby river, then deposited on the opposite bank. They all survived. Her neighbours were all killed. She has adopted the two orphans. Banda Aceh. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam



Chapter 4

Recent Developments in Oxfam, and the Way Forward

Developments in Oxfam's humanitarian work during the tsunami response period

Oxfam, like many others NGOs, is a rapidly evolving organisation which continues to invest in order to increase its skills and capacities for humanitarian response. Since the formation of its Humanitarian Consortium Management Group (the inter-affiliate body responsible for humanitarian response) in 2003, there have been considerable developments at the Oxfam International and affiliate HQ levels. These have included:

- A 'step aside process': a mechanism to negotiate inter-affiliate roles and responsibilities to ensure that the leading Oxfam affiliate has maximum capacity in a humanitarian response;
- The development of humanitarian relief register(s) to ensure that skilled and experienced staff are deployed in new emergencies;
- The development of a network of emergency managers and specialist cross-affiliate thematic working groups;
- The development of OI and affiliate policies and strategies (such as the OI Partnership policy), and the development of guidance and tools (such as the newly revised contingency planning guidelines), enshrined in Oxfam's Humanitarian Dossier and captured in documents such as affiliate emergency handbooks and manuals.

While these developments are substantial and reflect the constant evolution of Oxfam's humanitarian work, both at the OI level and within affiliate systems and structures, their effects were only partially felt in the tsunami response. Some measures did specifically support the response, however, such as the development of the centralised management team (TFMT) and improvements in country co-ordination by Oxfam affiliates over the period.

Current and future developments

At the time of writing, initiatives are under way within Oxfam that will have considerable impacts on future emergency responses. A framework for response to future exceptional emergencies, based on the learning from the tsunami, has been developed; and the confederation has embarked on a process to streamline its operation, introducing a single management structure (instead

Photo opposite: Girls play in front of their tent in Lapang IDP camp in Meulaboh. Children have very few opportunities for activities in the camps, but regular schools opened within months of the tsunami. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam

of independent Oxfam affiliates) at the country level, to improve efficiencies and increase impact. At the same time, a process is under way to focus the majority of Oxfam's investment and growth in humanitarian capacity in two sectors, those of water, sanitation and hygiene and of 'vulnerable livelihoods'. By concentrating its investment focus, Oxfam anticipates a period of growth across affiliates, resulting in extremely high levels of organisational competencies in these areas.

The challenge posed by the evaluations

Developments within Oxfam since the tsunami struck, and those currently in progress, all strive to improve the quality of the organisation's humanitarian response. The series of tsunami evaluations aims to do the same, through recommendations for change aimed at many different levels within the confederation. The challenge for Oxfam is how to respond to these recommendations, through the institutional processes currently under way and through new change initiatives.

As the evaluation management review reports: 'There were ... concerns that, although the [evaluation] exercise might identify the lessons that could be drawn from Oxfam's tsunami response experience, its organisational culture mitigated against these lessons actually being learned or translated into effective changes in policy and practice.'⁵²

The challenge to management and staff across the confederation is to demonstrate that such concerns are unfounded.

Epilogue

In October 2009, while this report was being written, a string of natural disasters hit South-East Asia, to which Oxfam and its partners are currently responding. An earthquake in Sumatra, Indonesia caused destruction around the city of Padang, killing 1,100 people⁵³ and leaving an estimated half a million homeless.⁵⁴ Tropical Storm Ketsana and Typhoon Parma swept through the Philippines, affecting over 5 million people, displacing 325,000 and killing 360, and leaving extensive flooding in its wake before moving on to cause significant damage in Viet Nam and Laos. An earthquake with a magnitude of 8.3, located 120 miles off the coast of Samoa, triggered a tsunami that caused extensive damage to low-lying areas in Samoa, American Samoa, and Tonga, and killed more than 170 people.⁵⁵

Oxfam and its partners have much work to do; may we learn from our past to meet the challenges of these and future emergencies.

Philip Horgan,

Oxfam International Tsunami Fund M&E Coordinator,
December 2009



Ina Wira holds cocoa pods harvested from her garden in the village of Satel it, on Nias island. Oxfam has prioritized assistance for poor agricultural producers in Nias, and has formed 60 farmers' self-help groups on the island to provide them with training and help to improve the quantity and quality of key primary commodities such as rubber and cocoa, and so achieve better market prices. Credit: Jim Holmes/Oxfam



Umar holding handful of cloves. Mohamed Latheef, aged 57, and his wife Umar have 5 children. They received an Oxfam cash grant through local partner SWOAD of 10,000 rupees to reestablish their spice packaging business which they run from their temporary shelter. Credit: Howard Davies/Oxfam

Annex 1. Evaluation methodology

The tsunami evaluation took place between the autumn of 2008 and the summer of 2009, as Oxfam's tsunami-related activities were coming to an end. The objective of the evaluation process was two-fold: firstly to enable Oxfam to reflect on and learn in practice from its response to the tsunami and therefore improve its response to future emergencies and, by sharing these findings, to hold itself accountable to funders (predominantly the public), beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.

The evaluation consisted of fourteen thematic studies covering the majority of Oxfam's work in its tsunami response. The only area not covered in the evaluation was education, although brief details of the education work carried out are included in Chapter 1. To ensure an independent point of view, twelve of the fourteen thematic evaluation studies were conducted by one or more independent consultants, the exceptions being the review of Corporate Accountability and that of Funding and Finance issues, which were co-ordinated by members of the OITF secretariat. The full list of evaluations in the series and author details can be found on the inside cover of this report.

Each thematic review was based on three main methodologies:

- A review of previous Oxfam evaluations and analysis documents;
- Workshops with Oxfam and staff from partner organisations involved in the tsunami response held in Chennai, India and Colombo, Sri Lanka;
- Additional surveys and interviews with Oxfam and partners' staff.

In the midst of the huge amount of work conducted by Oxfam across the different countries, we asked the evaluation leaders to delve into the programmes to find areas for praise, but also to analyse the areas that were less than perfect, from which many of the lessons learned and recommendations for change have emerged. Each review brought together lessons from across Oxfam affiliates and countries of the response.

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Final evaluation series:
Part 8 Disaster Risk
Reduction Review

Final evaluation series:
Part 9 Partners and
Partnerships Review

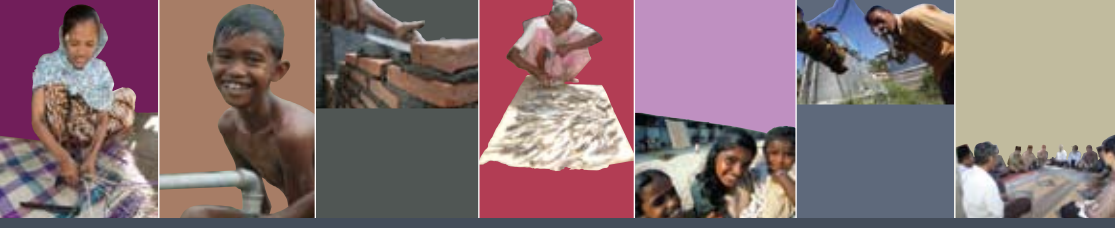
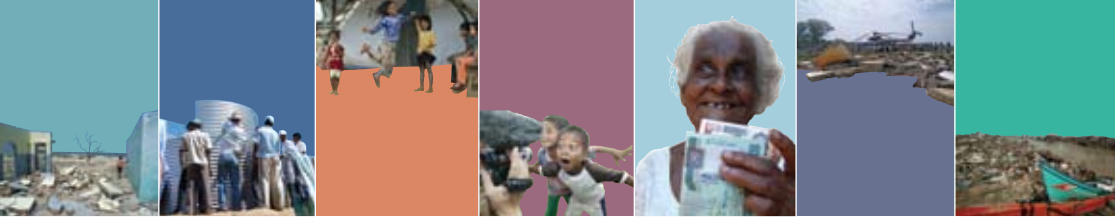
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and Structure Review



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Final evaluation series:
Part 2 Public
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Final evaluation series:
Part 3 Shelter Review

Final evaluation series:
Part 4 Gender Review

Final evaluation series:
Part 5 Downward
Accountability Review

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Part 6 Corporate
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Final evaluation series:
Part 7 Advocacy Review

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Linked Oxfam organization.

Oxfam International and Ucodep Campaign Office (Italy)

Email: ucodep-oi@oxfaminternational.org

Oxfam observer members

The following organizations are currently observer members of Oxfam International, working towards possible full affiliation:

Oxfam Japan: www.oxfam.jp

Oxfam India: www.oxfamindia.org

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