

**Independent Evaluation of  
Expenditure of DEC  
India Earthquake Appeal Funds**

**January 2001 – October 2001**

**VOLUME THREE**

**Sector Reports**

*Humanitarian Initiatives, UK  
Disaster Mitigation Institute, India  
Mango, UK  
December 2001*

*DMI/HI/Mango*

**DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat**

**VOLUME THREE**

*Sector Reports*

**Report One**

**Public Opinion Research by *Disaster Mitigation Institute***

**Part 1: Methodology**

**Part 2: Findings**

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**December 2001**

**Part One**

**Methodology**

## **1. Aims of the Research**

The aim of the community level research was to document the communities (beneficiaries and others) views of the January 2001 Gujarat earthquake response (by DEC Agencies and others). The evaluation sought to focus on agency adherence to the 10 points of the Red Cross Code of Conduct in addition to the targeting of interventions, with the shelter sector selected by the DEC as a specific area of interest.

### **1.1 Methodology Summary**

The community research was carried out by the Disasters Mitigation Institute (DMI) India, under the leadership of Mihir Bhatt, Honorary Director, and supported by an independent consultant from India, Preeti Bhat and the methodology consultant Sarah Routley. A series of key research topics were developed from the evaluation criteria in a workshop with the participation of members of the research team. To facilitate discussions with the community groups around each of the key topics, 3 participatory exercises were developed: a matching game, ranking and time-line exercise. Key informant and general interviews would allow the research teams to cross-check information, document personal views on the earthquake response and supplement the information from the exercises. In order to assist the team in recording the information a set of record-sheets, tables and matrix sheets were designed, to create a 'community pack' for the systematic recording of views from each community visited. Regular debrief sessions were built into the research plan to allow the team time to complete the community pack, reflect on and discuss the findings.

A total of 16 researchers were involved in the methodology workshop. It was proposed that the research would be carried out in approximately 60 communities (yet to be finalised), over a period of 6 weeks, by 4 teams of 4 researchers from DMI.

### **1.2 Evaluation Criteria and Research Topics**

During the first few days of the methodology workshop the various evaluation topics and the meaning of the 10 Principles of the Code of Conduct were explored and disaggregated by the research team. This allowed a list of key research topics that covered the most important principles and targeting issues to be developed. The research topics were then divided into factual information and opinion/judgements, questions about the interventions and the process.

	The interventions/aid		The process: How was it given	
	Topic	Method	Topic	Method
Fact	Which groups got aid? What aid did they get? Which criteria were used in the allocation of the aid? Who missed out? Timeliness, quality, appropriateness? Who gave aid?	Allocation game Allocation game  Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game / involvement line Involvement line	Communities involvement in phases of interventions Communities treated according to custom, culture, dignity Agencies acted accountably, transparently and with understanding Interventions changes in local capacity and reduction of future vulnerability	Involvement line Allocation game, Interviews Involvement line, interviews Capacity ranking
Opinion	Who should have got aid? Why? What should have been given? Why? When should it have been given? Why didn't this always happen	Allocation game Allocation game  Allocation game Allocation game Allocation game  Allocation game Interviews	The indirect and direct benefits of the interventions The desirability of the level of involvement How communities wanted to be treated by agencies How communities wanted agencies to act, (what does accountably, with understanding and transparency mean)	Interviews  Involvement line Involvement line, interviews Interviews, involvement line

The key questions and topics were arranged into 3 sets of topics, each corresponding to an exercise. Note the terms aid, relief and interventions are used interchangeably

## 2. The Allocation of Relief

### 2.1. Aim

To find out what the community felt about the targeting, timing, quality, and quantity of the various interventions and aid in their community.

## 2.2 Key Topics

Which groups received what aid in the community?

Who was missed out of relief interventions?

Did the community feel there was any discrimination? On what basis did this occur?

Did the community feel the relief interventions occurred at the best time, in the correct amount and or sufficient quality?

What assistance does the community feel they needed?

Who needed it? On what criteria should it have been given?

If not why wasn't it given according to the needs of the community?

How did they feel they were treated by the organisation? Did they feel they were treated with understanding, respect, according to custom, culture? How did the response and agencies make them feel (in the community's own words)?

*Note:* Particular attention is to be paid to any shelter interventions, including: tents, temporary and permanent housing examples

## 2.3 Exercise: The Allocation Game

- The group was asked to draw, or write onto cards, the interventions/aid that the community as a whole received following the earthquake. The cards were laid in a line on the ground.
- The group was then asked to draw or write who received each intervention/aid onto cards. The corresponding cards were laid below the first row of cards.
- Pre-prepared 'Timing Cards' (with 'too late', 'too early', 'on time' written on them), 'Quantity Cards' (with 'too little', 'too much', 'ok' on them) and 'Quality Cards' (with 'too low', 'too high', 'ok' on them) were then placed below each line in turn by members of the group.
- Finally, all the cards but the first row were removed and the groups who needed and should have got each intervention/item. The group then discussed who was missed out of the response and why, and what other interventions they needed. Any shelter interventions were elaborated upon during the exercise.

## 3. Community Involvement

### 3.1 Aim

To find out what level of community participation there was in the various responses, how the community felt about their level of participation and how they would ideally have liked to have been involved.

### 3.2 Key Topics

Which organisations undertook interventions in/for the community after the earthquake?

When did they begin working and what did they do?

How were community members involved in the visits or interventions (a list of options was developed, for levels and stages of involvement)?

How did community members feel about their level of involvement ('ok', wanted 'more' or 'less')?

How did they feel they were treated by the organisation? Did they feel they were treated with understanding, respect, according to custom, culture?

How would community members have wanted to be involved?

What do people feel about the response as a whole (i.e. too much assessment)?

Detailed questions about community involvement in shelter interventions, to be developed as appropriate

### **3.3 Exercise: Involvement Timeline**

- A horizontal axis was drawn over 3 flip chart pages representing a time-period from the earthquake until the present time. On the vertical axis the possible levels of involvement were listed.
- The group was asked to draw all the interventions (assessments, visits, distributions, programmes, evaluations etc.) that had occurred since the earthquake on the timeline. The groups were questioned to ensure all phases of interventions (assessments, meetings, and all visits) were included.
- The group was questioned about the level of the community's involvement in each of the interventions. A line from each intervention to the appropriate level of involvement was drawn.
- Finally, the group was asked how it would have liked to have been involved. This was marked on the line with a cross.

The exercise allowed for the detail of particular interventions to be focused on, such as the activities of the DEC members, the Government response, and the shelter response. It allowed intervention phases to be compared, i.e. the level of involvement in assessment, response, evaluations, the level of involvement immediately after the earthquake and then at the start of the rehabilitation phase, a comparison of different agency responses.

## **4. Changes in Community Capacity**

### **4.1 Aim**

To find out how the capacity of the community changed as a result of the various earthquake interventions, and what impact external organisations had on this change. To find out whether the community considers that such changes in its capacity would help reduce future vulnerability to disasters.

### **4.2 Key Topics**

How was community capacity (organisation, structures, contacts, skills, resources, knowledge, key people etc) affected by the response, (i.e. was it strengthened, reduced)?

Why/how did the change occur? What was the role of agencies direct and indirect in this?

What capacity was particularly important during the earthquake?

What existing or new capacity will be useful in future disasters?

#### **4.3 Exercise: Capacity Ranking Table**

- A table with 5 columns was drawn on a large flip chart page
- The group was asked to list all local capacities that were important at the time of the earthquake in the first column of the table. Capacity was explained as organisations, structures, external contacts, networks, skills, resources, knowledge, key people etc.
- The next 3 columns, were marked as ‘strength before’ the earthquake, ‘strength during’ the earthquake and ‘strength now’. The group was asked to rank with stones the strength of each capacity, before, during, and after the earthquake.
- Discussions were led by the researchers to establish why and how the capacity of the community changed. The reason for the change in capacity was noted in the final ‘why’ column of the table.
- The group discussed whether these changes in capacity would affect the community’s vulnerability to future disaster. The role of the DEC agencies in changing capacity or future vulnerability in particular was noted.

### **5. Research Techniques and Issues**

#### **5.1 Debriefing and Recording**

A key to the success of the research and depth of information gathered was not just the method of research itself, but the recording and write up of the findings. In order to allow adequate time to listen to the views of the community, for team debriefs and recording of findings a team of 4 researchers was allocated to each community for a period of 3 days.

Within each team, one team member was responsible for leading each exercise. All team members had a checklist of key topics to be covered in each exercise and the interviews. The 3 other members acted as observer, listener, recorder, and facilitator. Their role was to document the various discussions, observe the dynamics of the groups, and encourage discussion amongst the group and secondary discussions amongst some of the quieter group members. It was suggested that during the first exercise in each community one of the observers would make the necessary introductions of the team, gather background information on the community, and identify key informants within the community. This allowed the exercise to begin quickly upon the teams arrival. Members of Abhiyan assisted the researchers by introducing them to key members of the communities.

Regular debrief sessions were built into the research to allow regular discussion between team members. A series of record sheets, tables and matrices were designed to ensure that the full depth and richness of community views were recorded objectively, with limited interpretation or paraphrasing, for analysis by the evaluation team. The key topics, exercise guidelines, record sheets, and interview notes together comprised a community pack for each community.

Each day began with an exercise, lasting 3-4 hours, after which the team had a debrief session, which lasted up to 1 hour. During the exercise debrief the team recorded in the community pack: any missing voices, people to cross check with, missing topics (from key topics), team reflections and observations. The team then planned the interviews according to the information and voices missing from the exercise and the need to cross check information. The observers then read through their notes from the exercise and highlighted any key issues and quotes for

inclusion on the 'key issues matrix' and 'quotes tables' at the end of the day. Following this, the team carried out interviews for 2-3 hours. After the interview sessions the team had a final debrief, in which team members highlighted key quotes and issues discussed from their notes, all key issues and quotes from both their interview and exercise notes, were then added to the relevant tables in the community pack. Where possible the team indicated on the 'key issues matrix' who and how often issues were mentioned. The total number of people involved in the exercise and interviews were noted. The debrief session allowed discussion between the team members on the issues raised and methods used, and ensured that team reflections, and the depth of detail discussed by the community, was recorded.

## **5.2 Sequencing of Methods**

The correct sequencing of the exercises was crucial to ensure an increase in the level of detail about the response. The first exercise, the allocation game allowed discussion on what assistance the community received, the timing, quantity and quality of the interventions. The involvement line gave details of how the community was involved in the intervention and how they would have liked to be involved and finally the changes in community capacity ranking exercise focused on the impact (direct and indirect) of the response. The exercises were designed to facilitate general discussion around the key topics in an informal and open atmosphere.

The individual interviews and key informant interviews that followed the exercises allowed for progression to a greater depth of information and expression of personal views in private once a degree of trust had been established. The importance of informal chats to women, children, and groups that were difficult to access was highlighted during the research and ways to document such information discussed.

## **5.3 Bias, Missing Voices, Triangulation and Gatekeepers**

The researchers identified a number of potential 'missing voices' including low status communities and members of lower castes/status, poorly educated, widows, women, the disabled and sick, those living on the outskirts of communities, working in near by towns during the day. In order to try to capture the views of these groups, the researchers tried to identify those missing from each exercise, comparing key informant information on who was living in the communities with observations on who attended exercises and records of who had been interviewed. The team planned the timing and location of further exercises and follow-up interviews accordingly to try to obtain the views of missing voices. The timing of the researcher visits alternated between morning and afternoon visits to afternoon and evening visits, in the hope of capturing the voices of a greater section of the community. It was hoped that the researchers might occasionally stay over night in communities, to allow late evening discussions.

Great thought was put into the appropriate sites for conducting the exercises in order to encourage the attendance of as diverse a cross section of the community as possible. Areas such as temples, markets, communal outside spaces, wells were suggested as possible sites. The team discussed the advantages and disadvantages of choosing open outside areas where passers-by could feel free to join in and where people could drift in and out as their time allowed. This would also allow community members to see what the research involved. Closed areas were also used where group sizes and levels of participation could be more easily controlled. The need in some situations to go out looking for certain groups and carry out an exercise at a convenient

location to them, i.e. close to a field where women were working, or next to an area of building activities was highlighted.

The role of children in terms of providing information on communities activities and views and their openness to discussions was considered by the group, who intended to run some children's exercises concurrently with the main exercises.

The importance of cross-checking, triangulation, identification of bias and reduction of the impact of bias was discussed during the workshop, as was the role of gatekeepers and key informants. The research team suggested that priests, the barber, postman/milkman, the midwife, shopkeepers, children and women's group/dairy group leaders might act as gatekeepers and key informants in communities. Researchers felt that the uniform composition of the research team in terms of age (mostly early 30's, late 20's), status/caste, level of education, experience, language (Gujarati speakers, not vernacular), lack of local knowledge might lead to some bias in the findings. It was suggested that Abhiyan members, who knew the area, and were of a more diverse age, status etc, could compliment the DMI team.

The involvement of Abhiyan in the research was discussed at length. The possible biases created by Abhiyan's role as both implementing agency and co-ordinator during the response was felt to be outweighed by their knowledge of the communities, key informants, greater diversity of staff (compared to the DMI team). Although it was important to recognise the possibility of the introduction of additional bias, and the need of sensitising all team members to the approaches to be used and aim of the research in order to reduce bias.

#### **5.4 Expectations and Responsibilities**

The team raised concerns over whether or not communities would understand the nature of the research and if they would understand the value of giving their time to the exercises. It was decided that a clear and transparent introduction by the team was essential to their understanding of the aims, methods and purpose of the research. It was anticipated that this would assist in dispelling false hopes and expectations of the community.

A discussion of the responsibilities of each researcher not to push people to discuss issues they found painful or preferred not to discuss raised concerns about the political nature of certain issues and the need to consider who, if anyone, was gaining political capital from conversations and the research process.

The role of the researchers as recorders of community member's views on the response was emphasised throughout the workshop. The importance of researchers being able to objectively discuss issues, and not to interpret or express their own views and knowledge, was highlighted. This would need further monitoring throughout the initial stages of the research during debrief and monitoring sessions.

### **5.5 Quantitative and Qualitative Information**

The nature of most of the findings will be qualitative, yet the methodology and recording process was designed to allow some quantitative analysis of the information. For example, the key issues matrix, which listed the key discussion issues, indicated the approximate number of times issues were raised and by whom. By recording how many people were involved in the exercises and interviews it was possible to say that out of discussions with x number of community members a certain issue arose y number of times. This would allow issues to be ranked by frequency of discussion. The process would also allow the team to follow-up why certain groups were raising particular issues.

### **5.6 Site Selection**

To allow the views of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to be heard, it was proposed that the research would be carried out in areas inside and outside of DEC agency operation, and where other agencies only were present, (including the Government) and areas where no formal response was made. The criteria for site selection included; the level of impact of earthquake and numbers affected, the spread of DEC agencies and partners, Kutch and non-Kutch areas, the spread of other organisations/government, access and distance from road and towns, urban and rural mix. Each DEC agencies was asked to select and prioritise 5 communities they would like included in the evaluation. From this list, and according to the selection criteria, it was proposed that the research team would select 50 communities.

## **6. Review of Research Methodology**

The researchers and writer analysed the results over a 10-day period. All community packs were analysed, the research team was interviewed on their findings according to community and topics, and key topics were discussed in plenary to ensure the depth of information was analysis. The writer and research team found the community packs and formats contained a wealth of information on communities' views, the need for translation for the report writing limited the information that could be included.

The research team stated the approach had the following advantages and disadvantages

<b>Advantages of approach</b>	<b>Disadvantages of approach</b>
<p>children could participate and be used to cross check information</p> <p>information could be collected on a broad range of topics</p> <p>compared to questionnaires a greater depth of information could be gained</p> <p>combination of exercises and interviews allowed balance of detail and personal views</p> <p>the records allowed missing voices from exercises to be followed up and captured</p> <p>communities could share their own experiences freely in interviews, having established trust during group exercises</p> <p>communities had a wealth of information to share on their own experiences and views</p> <p>it inspired the team to practice tools and listen to communities, once they realised all they had to share and their willingness to participate</p> <p>2-3 days in communities allowed a relationship to be developed with communities, trust to be established</p> <p>team members learned from each other and worked closely together, high level of inter dependence necessary</p> <p>allowed leaders and gatekeepers to be taken aside for interviewing and sessions with communities to be carried out simultaneously</p> <p>allowed views of whole village/all groups in village to be heard</p> <p>games entertained people and were unique so attracted interest and involvement</p> <p>higher degree of trust when community member can see what is being written</p> <p>daily debrief sessions allow reflection on information, recording of what was heard on the spot, without losing original meanings</p>	<p>visualization was difficult for some illiterate people</p> <p>verbal and visual techniques were not always appreciated by educated people</p> <p>much responsibility placed on team leaders to manage sessions</p> <p>quality of data dependant on broad range of skills within team</p> <p>bringing different groups together to discuss what they received risked conflict</p> <p>recording and analysis took alot of time</p> <p>required emotional sensitivity towards victims of earthquake</p> <p>quotes obtained in vernacular - difficult to translate</p> <p>some limitations of group work if community leaders present</p> <p>pressure at end of day to complete records and participate in team debriefing</p> <p>difficulties in comparing situations and drawing conclusions on trends</p> <p>people were asked to state if relief was of sufficient, insufficient quality etc without benchmarks being given</p> <p>the exercises didn't always allow detail to be collected</p> <p>analysis took much time</p>

The research team felt the main advantages of the combination of participatory exercises, focus group discussions and individual interviews used was that information about a broad range of topics could be found in a relatively short period of time, that information could be cross-checked and the views of those missing from exercises could be followed up in interviews. One disadvantage was the time required during the research to record findings and debrief team members and the time required at the end for the analysis of the findings. It was considered

helpful to use the Code of Conduct in order to assess how agencies measured up against an agreed standard. Initially the team were concerned that community members may not see the relevance of sharing their views. Some team members saw the research as experimental and were unsure what the outcome would be, One stated *'the research is like a bike helmet, you do not know in advance how well it will work'*.

In reality, community members stated that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss their experiences of the response with the team, particularly if it would assist victims of future disasters. Some stated they liked the way they were treated by the team and that they took time to listen to their views- *'the team didn't just ask for chairs, but sat with us on the floor like our relatives would do'*.

Some members of the community stated that no one else had asked what they wanted or needed, or how they felt about the response. In general the team felt the community liked the approach taken by them, some stated that they had particularly enjoyed participating in the exercise games- *'some people had never held a pen, and to be given one made them feel good'* stated one village member.

### **6.1 Constraints and Limitations**

The team found the groups most difficult to access, those unable or unwilling to participate in the research to be: the elderly, sick, nomadic, Muslim women, lower castes (Dalit). It was more difficult to access people living on the outskirts of communities, the nomadic, politically involved/active, mentally distressed and those with disabilities. It was found to be harder to gain information from women in the presence of men, and members of lower castes in the presence of higher caste members. Those who had got the relief they desired were less willing to participate in some of the exercises, they stated they had no strong feelings or complaints. Exercises were carried out in sites close to women and particular communities to encourage their participation. The team found that the lack of female researchers (2) limited access to certain groups of women, (particularly Muslims). Although overall, 42% of community members consulted were women it is thought that the level of information obtained from women was lower and possibly less accurate than if a higher number of women researchers had been involved in the research. The composition of the team, -largely well educated, professional (including a social worker, a lawyer) young men, who were mostly unfamiliar with the vernacular was thought to have created some bias, although this was mitigated to some extent by their previous research experience.

The team found that those most willing and able to contribute their views were those who felt they had missed out of the response, or got little, women when they were alone, those with experience of outsiders and practised at speaking to agency staff, (such as Panchayat members), and members of certain occupation groups- shop keepers, teachers, doctors, and children. Those with the loudest voice will have an obvious impact on the findings, although routine cross checking of information with as wider a range of people as possible, reduced sure bias. Within each community key informants and gatekeepers were identified, such as Sarpanch, Panchayat members, representatives from occupations such as shopkeepers, teachers, hairdressers, cleaners, labourers, farmers, small business men, masons, NGO staff, Anganwadi (the children's workers), and religious leaders. These were found to be vital for cross checking information.

Many of the communities visited comprised of different neighbourhoods, of segregated social and religious groups, hence it can't be assumed that the views obtained reflect those of the community as a whole. Where feasible the researchers obtain the views of community members of each neighbourhood, although this was difficult in large villages and urban areas. The team found in some cases that community members couldn't identify the agency responsible for some responses, and were unaware of the links of local partners to DEC agencies. For the purpose of exercise researchers asked about the interventions carried out by all agencies in order to disaggregate information on DEC agencies interventions during the analysis. Specific examples relating to all agencies were obtained, due to the difficulties in cross checking the examples with the agencies concerned for the purpose of this report agency names have been removed. The term 'agencies' refers generically to international NGOs and their partners (including DEC), local, national, regional organisations, corporate organisations and government bodies. A further limitation was the size of the sample, on average 2.4 % of the community was consulted in each community, although this dropped to 0.56 % in the 7 largest communities. The timeframe for the research allowed 2-3 days in each community. Due to the lack of accommodation the team were unable to sleep over night, hence a lot of time was taken up with travel, and the team was only available in communities during the day.

It must be stressed, that the information documented is that of the views of community members only. The approach was designed to provide a picture of some of the community members' views on the response only. In some cases it has been possible to identify some general trends, although due to the same sample the numbers included represent a guide only, and should not be considered as necessarily representative of the response as a whole. In some exercises people were asked to give a score and categorise interventions as, for example late or on time, of good, bad or OK quality, no benchmarks were given for this, the perception of people only was noted. The reasons for some of the complaints about agencies may be beyond the control of the agencies, and due initially to external factors, such as lack of funding. In some cases the only real criticism of agencies is their failure to explain their constraints to communities and why it was not possible for them to perform better. The issues raised by the communities have been recorded objectively with no attempt being made to justify the findings.

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Ends

*DMI/HI/Mango*

**DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat**

**Volume Three**

*Sector Reports*

**Public Opinion Research**

*Disaster Mitigation Institute*

**Part 2: Findings**

**‘No one has ever asked us what we thought before’**

***Sarah Routley***

*Humanitarian Initiatives*

December 2001

## 1. Introduction

The research was carried out by the Disasters Mitigation Institute (DMI) India, under the leadership of Mihir Bhatt, Honorary Director, supported by an independent consultant from India, Preeti Bhat and a UK-based research consultant, Sarah Routley. A series of key research topics were developed from the evaluation criteria in a workshop with the participation of members of the research team. To facilitate discussions with the community groups around each of the key topics, three participatory exercises were developed: a matching game, ranking and time-line exercise. Key informant and general interviews allowed the research teams to cross-check information, document personal views on the earthquake response and supplement the information from the exercises. In order to assist the team in recording the information a set of record sheets, tables and matrix sheets were designed, to create a 'community pack' for the systematic recording of views from each community visited. Regular debrief sessions were built into the research plan to allow the team time to complete the community pack, reflect on and discuss the findings.

A total of 12 researchers were involved in the methodology workshop. It was proposed that the research would be carried out in 50 communities, over a period of 6 weeks, by 3 teams of 4 researchers.

### 1.1. Coverage

A total of 493 interventions and an additional 507 contacts between communities and agencies were analysed in 49<sup>1</sup> communities. A total of 2,372 people were consulted, including 1,005 women (42%), and the total population of the 49 communities was estimated to be 127,180. On average 2.4 % of the community was consulted in each community, although this dropped to 0.56 % in the 7 largest communities

### 1.2 Breakdown of the 49 communities

Rural	43
Urban	7
Kutch	38
badly affected	33
medium affected	13
minimal affected	3
DEC presence	24

### 1.3 Constraints and Limitations

As the views documented are those of the community members involved in the research only, it cannot be assumed that they reflect the views of the community as a whole. In larger and urban communities comprised of many neighbourhoods, the research was carried out in one neighbourhood only. Communities discussed the work of over 223 different organisations, including DEC agencies and their partners. For the sake of the report the names of all organisations have been removed from this report and the term organisation or agency has been used generically. Any quotations used have been translated from the vernacular, although every effort has been made to retain the original communities views, they are the views of individuals and do not necessarily represent of the overall community.

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the results for one village were mislaid during the analysis and only found later.

## 2. Provision of Relief Supplies

### 2.1 Targeting

Interventions stated by communities to be those needed most and least, were as follows:

*Table 1: Most and least required interventions*

Most needed interventions	Least needed interventions (that were provided)
<p><b>Most needed and supplied</b>            food, or communal kitchens (when cooking utensils lost)            tents, (for those with destroyed, damaged houses, or scared by tremors)            domestic kits, blankets, cooking utensils, beds            livelihood interventions            building materials for housing</p> <p><b>Most needed and not supplied (or in limited supply)</b>            Water (sources, supplies and containers damaged)            debris removal and assistance clearing bodies            immediate first aid (particularly in rural areas)            livelihood support, employment opportunities, cash for work            material to make own clothes            cash to replace belongings            information on entitlements and government schemes</p>	<p>educational kits (schools were on holiday)            clothes (inappropriate)            temporary schools            mosquito nets (not general practice to use nets)            toys            expensive items in agricultural kits (electric thresher), or distributions</p>

**Criteria of Allocation:** Communities felt that relief was not given according to need, and in general they were unaware of any needs assessments being carried out in the early stages of the response. They stated there was little or no consultation during agency assessments and when there was, it was related to specific items that agencies possessed and were keen to distribute- *'because they had something they gave it to us'*. Another comment was- *'if there is water in the well, only then can it come to the tank'*

29 women and 22 men stated some form of discrimination affected the amounts of aid they received. The criteria for receipt of relief, according to frequency of occurrence, were stated by community members as follows.

*Table 2: frequency of criteria used for allocation*

<b>Most frequent criteria</b>	<b>Medium frequent</b>	<b>Least frequent</b>
Caste	Extent of damage / distance from epicentre	Membership of specific groups: age, widows, occupations, skill based, gender
Sectarian / religious / political affiliation	Need / lack of resources	Visibility / popularity of group
Location / remoteness / access	Population size	Presence in home area (migrants got less)

Communities reported direct and indirect beneficiary selection by agencies leading to positive and negative discrimination.

**Direct Discrimination:** Many organisations selected groups according to their own mandate and interests, distributing either through them to all groups or more often only to their own constituents. Positive discrimination was aimed mostly at particular religious and political groups, particular age and caste groups, women's groups and occupational groups (for training, livelihood support and kits). One Christian group for example built houses only for Christians, although they did give an option for conversion. Some higher caste groups collected money outside Gujarat and distributed it within their own communities in the Earthquake area.

In general this was seen as positive when it related to those most at need, and when it targeted vulnerable groups left out by other agencies such as widows and elderly. Generally, communities stated that the criteria should be according to economic status, which was distinct from caste categorisations, and that such selection had meant the wealthier members of society had received more from their peers than the poorer - *'my brother, nobody is bothered about the poor'* a Muslim Janaby lady said.

**Indirect Discrimination:** There were many examples where the processes used by agencies led to discrimination according to gender, location, caste, wealth/poverty, and visibility. Some agencies distributed through community Relief Committees where various degrees of representation were reported, with some communities stating they had not received items given to the Committee on their behalf - *'the leaders and Committee members got lots of relief - the ex-Sarpanch has built a new house outside of the village'*

Women, lower caste groups and those representing smaller numbers stated they were left out of decision making in the relief committees and hence were also omitted from relief distributions often because the process used excluded them from participating- *'when the clothes were dropped on the road by trucks there was a stampede. The women were too shy to go so we sent the children - the clothes we got were of no use to the elderly or the women'*. And again- *'those who were there snatched everything - the poor were left out - how could this happen when so many poor are here?'*

Some agencies insisted on communities queuing for items, and distributed on first come, first served basis, with the result that higher social groups invariably joined the front of the queue. Some caste groups reported that it was unacceptable for them to join the queues at all and many women had similar reports. A number of comments are recorded on this issue- *'we were told to stand in a queue to receive items. All castes had to stand together but the lower castes felt bad and couldn't stand with the high castes, so couldn't get anything'*

*'the high caste were always at the front of the queue and by the time we got there everything was gone'*

*'as women we couldn't queue in a public place, so we got nothing'*

*'the women were unable to queue for hours as we were looking after children'*

Some leaders exerted a high level of control over distributions insisting all items had to be given to the Committees and setting specific times for the distributions. This led to indirect forms of discrimination- *'we waited everyday at 4.00, the time given by the leaders for the distribution to begin, but nothing ever came'*.

Some agencies based distributions on ration cards. There were cases where this excluded specific groups, such as those who had lost their cards in the earthquake, recently arrived migrants and those who were newly married. Muslim groups complained they lost out through this system as the ration cards were based on an average number of five family members and the majority of people in their community had more than three children.

Organisations that catered for all social groups together, in feeding centre programmes, permanent shelter schemes etc., excluded certain groups who refused to accept such conditions. Higher castes, frequently opted out of such interventions, refusing to eat with and live next to lower caste community members, and in some cases they put pressure on leaders to stop such interventions.

Another form of indirect discrimination occurred when an element of community participation was built into a programme. People were asked to collect materials such as tents or sacks of cement from organisational offices. These types of interventions discriminated against vulnerable members of the community. In one case elderly people were asked to collect tents from over 15kms away. A degree of self-selection occurred because people rejected the conditions and criteria of such programmes. This was often the case in shelter interventions. These were often rejected due to the level of financial contribution required, the design, size, location of or relocation required for the house construction. There were some reports of political manipulation of aid, with examples cited of one political Party preventing aid from reaching supporters of the rival Party.

## 2.2 Timing

There were some general trends between interventions and areas:

- The initial response was generally considered to have been timely. Such interventions included; Food (reported as timely in 100% of interventions), water (in 77%), blankets (in 70%), temporary shelter (tents, tarpaulin, in 51%), clothes (in 80%). Frequently these were supplied by local organisations or agencies from areas close to Gujarat, rather than by international agencies.
- However, not all interventions were seen as having arrived on time. Communities stated that livelihood interventions (in 60% of cases), government cheques (68%), permanent shelter (96%) and temporary shelter (49%) consistently arrived late. In particular seeds were reported as arriving too late to be planted in 80% of cases, and hence were of limited value. (Note that if interventions hadn't occurred and were unlikely to occur in a community they were not included in the exercise).
- Overall, 281 interventions were considered to have been delivered in a timely manner (57%), and 212 delivered late.
- There was a consistent pattern of aid-delivery that emerged over time - the initial response was often to urban areas but was quickly diverted to rural areas and to smaller communities once the full impact of the earthquake was realised.
- There was a drop in the number of interventions and visits by agencies over time with 76% of interventions occurring from Jan-April. One possible reason for this was that the later interventions required less contact with communities compared to the earlier distributions. Throughout the period Jan-Aug, 50% of contacts with communities were meetings, surveys, or assessments.

## 2.3 Quantity

Several noteworthy trends became apparent between interventions:

- Immediate relief items such as: food, tents, blankets, domestic kits, and clothes were received in sufficient quantities, or even in excess in the majority of communities. An excess quantity of food was received in 6% of villages, blankets in 2.6%, tents in 2.3%, domestic kits in 2% and clothes in 28%.
- High levels of inconsistency were seen in quantities of specific items: 44% of communities stated they received insufficient quantities of clothes whilst, 28% received too many. 48% of communities received sufficient or too many tents, whilst 52% received too few. 70% of communities felt they had received sufficient or too much food (with agencies pushing extra amounts on people by threatening to give it to cattle), whilst 29% of communities received insufficient amounts.
- Inconsistencies were reported within the work of agencies. Some communities received tents in high numbers - in one case over 2000 tents were distributed to a community with a population of 900 by one agency, yet the same agency refused requests by a neighbouring community. Although there may have been criteria for selection of communities, no explanation was given by the agency.
- Provision of water reduced quickly over time as organisations struggled to keep up with demand and limited (or no) provision was made for sustainable delivery systems or storage facilities. 21% of communities reported insufficient quantities of water. Although 78%

reported sufficient quantities, it was noted by many that it was provided on a first-come, first-served basis, so people on the outskirts of towns were often left out and gaps between deliveries meant that it was not uncommon for specific groups of people to go without water for 4-5 days.

- Shelter interventions in general were reported as being insufficient in over half the communities interviewed (the highest insufficient scoring of all interventions). Although the tents distributed were seen as meeting immediate needs, permanent shelter was extremely limited and the greatest need. 33 of the communities surveyed had 100% destruction of their homes, with only 3 communities reported as having a minimal level of damage. Despite this only 3 communities had housing construction started, and only 9 were considered to be adopted by an agency for house provision. A total of 119 houses were under construction for the general community in the 49 communities surveyed. Additionally, in 6 other communities less than 100 houses were under construction for specific groups (such as the elderly, widows, Muslims and lower castes). The timing of the survey was such that the majority of housing projects were just beginning at the time this report was finalised, although there were few signs that more houses would be rebuilt in the immediate future. In the majority of cases communities had rejected adoption and re-housing due to the inappropriateness of the package being offered due to either the design, size, relocation site or financial contribution expected.
- Overall, 36% of interventions that were received were considered by communities to be of insufficient quantity, 4% of communities reported the quantity as being too great and 60% said it was sufficient (Note: if something was not received it was not included by community members in this assessment).

There were some trends seen between communities

- Sufficient, or excess relief was received by 73% of Kutch communities surveyed, compared to 54% of non-Kutch communities. When urban and rural communities were compared, people in 74% rural communities reported excess, or sufficient relief, compared to 28% of urban communities. Insufficient amounts of relief reached 46% of non-Kutch communities, 27% of Kutch communities and 71% urban compared to only 26% rural communities. This supported the trend observed by the researchers, that higher levels of relief reached Kutch communities, due to the media attention and proximity to the epi-centre. Urban and large centres of population received proportionally less relief after the initial days, due to agencies striving for maximum breadth of coverage and selecting smaller communities: higher levels of agency activity were experienced in rural areas.
- When shelter interventions were analysed, it was found that over 51% of Kutch and 47% rural communities received sufficient and excess interventions, where as 70% of non Kutch and 71% of urban communities received insufficient levels of relief, according to the views of community members. This can, perhaps be explained by the false assumption that the government would assist urban areas as a result of the greater level of awareness of conditions there and higher levels of media exposure.

**Characteristics determining the quantity of relief received:** During the research the team analysed the characteristics that were perceived by the communities to determine the quantity of relief they received. The strength, influence and connections of the community leader were seen as the most important factor in determining the amount of relief received-

*'one strong, well-connected leader is better than 100 others'*

*'we received 2000 tents for 900 households because we had a prominent politician in the community'*

*'if our leader would shout louder and demand more we would get more, as others have done in other villages'*

Table 3: Factors determining levels of relief

Factors determining receipt of high levels of relief	Factors determining receipt of low levels of relief
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active community leaders, with good politically, external contacts</li> <li>• proximity to municipal centres, towns, highways, transportation networks</li> <li>• previous links to NGOs, religious groups (Jains and Muslims)</li> <li>• visible, famous communities (such as weavers)</li> <li>• united communities with a representative village committee</li> <li>• strong local government or local institutions</li> <li>• high level of damage and deaths, (proximity to epi centre)</li> <li>• good individual contacts, relatives in cities,</li> <li>• high awareness of relief process</li> <li>• unity amongst castes and high level of inter caste co-operation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• members of lower caste / poorer groups (eg. labourers)</li> <li>• members of smaller groups and minorities</li> <li>• people displaced from their own communities</li> <li>• nomadic people and migrants</li> <li>• those living on outskirts of communities</li> <li>• women</li> <li>• those with larger families (Muslims)</li> <li>• those under represented on community committees</li> <li>• those with weak leaders</li> </ul>

## 2.4 Quality

- Overall, 79% of interventions were considered to be of sufficient quality, 17% were deemed to be 'ok', and 4% of insufficient quality. It is important to note that the term 'quality' didn't refer to the appropriateness of the items - clothes were considered inappropriate in virtually all interventions, yet were considered to be of insufficient quality in 40% of interventions, and sufficient in only 3%, hence considered inappropriate and of bad quality, and often stated as being old and worn out.
- The only interventions that were considered to have been of sufficient quality in over 90% of communities were food interventions (reported as sufficient by 99% of communities), water (97%), domestic kits and household items (96%), sanitation (of which there were only 5 examples), and education kits (92%). Communities stated that there was a difference in the

quality of NGO- and government-distributed food, (the government food being generally of a lower quality). The content of domestic kits varied greatly, but the quality of items included was felt to be good. The water provided was considered to be of a good quality, yet the intervention itself not considered to be of sufficient quality one due to its temporary nature. Blankets were stated as being of sufficient quality in 76% of interventions, but in all other cases they were stated as being very old. Medical services were considered to be of sufficient quality in 82% of cases, and livelihood interventions in 79% of cases (although mainly these consisted of kit distributions).

- 80% of shelter interventions were considered to be of a sufficient quality, which related in the main to temporary accommodation such as tents, as few semi permanent or permanent housing interventions were completed. It was stated that as the distribution of tents was not a common intervention, any tent's distributed were considered to be better than tarpaulin. When questioned further there were issues raised concerning the quality of the material with many tents being damaged and destroyed in the first 8 months. In addition communities stated tent sizes to be too small, that the tents became very hot during the day, and that they couldn't be used to cook in. The quality of other temporary and semi-permanent shelter were observed by communities to be low - there were several examples of shelters having collapsed, which can be partly attributed to incorrect usage of the materials due to unfamiliarity.
- Some communities reported that materials distributed for temporary or semi-permanent shelters were being diverted to repair original houses, hence weakening the constructions they were intended for. Another reason stated for the low quality of such shelter was that incomplete sets of materials were given, such as roofing tiles but not supports. This led some communities to sell the materials as they could not afford to purchase the missing items. In some cases the instructions for shelter construction were not well understood and no technical advice was provided, so materials were used incorrectly, reducing the quality of the construction. Where permanent housing interventions existed they were stated as being of a high quality – however, it is unlikely that this was based on technical knowledge – rather that as cement and concrete were being used, people assumed the quality was good.

## 2.5 Appropriateness

- Without exception communities felt the clothes distributed were not appropriate, particularly for women, the elderly, Muslims and the men who wore traditional clothes. It was often reported that the clothing was used as filling for quilts- *'we got many clothes, but I haven't seen anyone wearing them'*
- Distribution of food grains were stated as appropriate in all cases, The importance of establishing the flourmills services after the earthquake suggesting milled grain may have been more appropriate although communities stated that the whole grains could be stored easier and for longer. A 3-month grain distribution by one agency was considered particularly appropriate as it relieved the pressure from people of having to seek immediate employment and provided some security. Initially, in some areas, processed and packaged food was distributed. This was sometimes discarded on the road, as communities were not familiar with it. The initial food kitchens were considered appropriate as communities stated

they were too traumatized to cook, had lost all their utensils and hence were unable to cook for themselves.

Some building interventions were considered inappropriate, and people were given booklets and videos to show them how to construct semi-permanent structures and earthquake-proof houses. The majority of people stated they didn't understand the instructions, some were illiterate, and there were limited video players available- *'Earthquake proofing is fine if you have the means - but what about us poor? What are we to do when we can't even afford roofing over our families?'* Communities complained there was little or no technical assistance provided, only a few examples of training were seen and, in general, they were aimed at skilled people, and people complained they didn't have the time, money or materials to construct dwellings as advised. *'If we spend our time building we can't work. Many of us migrate for labour as there is only farming here and farming always fails'*

- The required construction materials were either not supplied, or were supplied in insufficient quantities to enable communities to build according to the advice given. The research teams cited examples of misleading posters put out by aid agencies on how to build earthquake-proof houses. People felt confused over the intended permanency of some constructions, and in general felt they had received too little information and explanation from implementing agencies
- The appropriateness of the agricultural inputs was widely questioned by communities. Although seed distributions were seen as a very appropriate intervention, some farmers stated that the wrong seeds had been given for areas of dry farming. The contents of the agricultural kits were often seen as inappropriate, as some included items which were clearly not appropriate (such as electric threshers which couldn't be used on the majority of farms as there was no electricity) and there were also examples of unfamiliar items being provided (such as ox and hand tools to communities who were used to working with tractors). There were contradictory views over the appropriateness of fodder seed distributions, with some communities stating they would have preferred higher value crop seeds, such as millet or pulses and some cattle owners complained of the lack of assistance to cattle producers (with the exception of a cattle trough construction project)
- The value of certain interventions was mentioned by some community members as inappropriate. They stated that certain items that had been distributed were expensive but had no real use: some seeds, tracksuits, high-tech items included in kits and inappropriate livelihood interventions (looms). People stated they would have preferred cheaper items or a lower amount of cash, and complained about the lack of consultation and explanation about the provision of such items.
- Particularly appropriate interventions which were specifically mentioned included: a cash-for-work scheme which paid people to clear debris, remove thorn trees and construct homes; a food-for-work scheme which allowed people to work on their own houses in return for food rations; the government cash compensation scheme for those who died on the day of the earthquake was seen as appropriate although some complained that it did not include those who died later from the injuries caused as a result of the earthquake.

- The process of allocations raised issues of appropriateness within communities. Many of the agricultural kits were distributed only to farmers with over 10 acres of land or those who had lost the most valuable houses (Grade 5 category) and hence excluded labourers, traders and small landholders. There was much dissatisfaction with the original grading and many felt they then lost out on other interventions.
- The government cheque compensation scheme was stated as being inappropriate by the majority of those interviewed. Rural communities stated that they were unfamiliar with the bank systems, and that opening an account cost money, and illiterate people stated they were unable to fill out the appropriate forms. Outstanding loans were deducted from the cheque amount by the banks, and once deposited the cheques took up to 15 days to clear. The size of cheque related solely to the level of damage and not the size of the house, hence those with larger houses felt that they lost out. In the majority of cases, cheques were delayed and many are still outstanding. When the cheques were finally obtained it was often cited as being as a result of individuals chasing them up or using personal connections- *'Should we spend our time chasing government cheques or earning the money ourselves?'*
- The cheque instalment system created problems, as a result of the initial instalment being insufficient to build structures of a standard that would pass the government requirements and hence enable the second instalment to be collected. Consequently, first instalments were frequently used to repair damaged homes. Community members stated they would have preferred the payment in one smaller instalment rather than three. The housing adoption scheme created confusion and inconsistencies – various organisations used different adoption criteria and communities were often unwilling to accept their proposals in the hope that a better offer would come along. Few adoptions actual led to housing construction within the research period (3 out of 9). Communities reported that once they had been “adopted” other agencies were discouraged and actively stopped from implementing programmes in the same community. In reality even when a community accepted adoption large numbers of its members opted out – particularly those with houses which had experienced the most damage, and consequently which had qualified for larger government cheques.
- There was deemed to be an inappropriate level of flexibility and consultation on the design, size and location of houses. The majority of adoption schemes were rejected by communities due to issues concerning the lack of exterior space for animals, lack of courtyard areas for women, mixed housing areas when castes were used to living in segregated communities, and the lack of relation to the size of the original house. In all but 2 examples, consultation occurred only once the designs had been finalised, and hence agencies presented designs to communities with little discussion. Communities were left in the position of having to reject or accept them having had little information. Where consultation over design did occur, community members were able to make small changes only, such as to internal shelving and cupboards, although several designs allowed for extensions to be made at a later date.

## 2.6 Recommendations made by the Community Members

Throughout the research communities made suggestions as to how the response could have been improved. They stated that in general they were satisfied with the assistance they had been given and appreciated the work of the agencies community groups, but suggested the following-

- Involvement in beneficiary selection: communities should be asked who the poor were, rather than the focus of attention being the community leaders or Committees;
- Prioritising of needs and interventions types - it was stated that with greater consultation many of the inappropriate interventions would have been avoided and the impact on recovery would have been greater. (It is important to note that communities who rejected many of the housing interventions as inappropriate felt that this could have been avoided if there had been greater consultation with communities – especially women);
- People wanted to receive cloth and make their own clothes;
- Allocation criteria should be according to need or ‘economic status’ as communities termed it;
- The process of distribution should be monitored to ensure receipt by intended target population;
- Distributions should not be carried out on a first-come first-served basis. It was considered inappropriate to only consult Relief Committees about interventions and not the wider community. Such Committees were reportedly not always considered representative of all groups, although they clearly played an important role in distribution and coordination in many situations;
- The standard ration card needs to be updated and redistributed according to updated Panchayat (council) lists. Lists should be held at block (sub-District) level in case of loss.
- Key community people should be nominated to coordinate or manage relief distributions;
- There should be greater flexibility in interventions. Some people stated that they would have preferred cheaper, more useful items, or cash, if they had been asked. Fewer adoptions would have failed if communities were consulted over designs in advance and agencies were more flexible;
- There should be greater coordination between agencies, particularly over shelter and the adoption schemes, to ensure consistent standards and to avoid confusion.

## 3. Participation of Community Members in the Response

Some general trends in the perception of community members over their participation were highlighted-

- When asked how they felt about their level of participation in interventions, in 27% of interventions communities felt their participation was sufficient, in 59% of interventions it was felt to be insufficient and in 14% of interventions it was stated that participation was too high.
- Involvement in shelter programmes appears to be higher than all other programmes: 74% of shelter interventions actively involved people in programming, compared to 51% all other

interventions. In only 14% of shelter interventions people's opinions were asked only and in 10% they were informed only briefly or not at all. The level of participation in shelter programmes reduced over time with 76% interventions actively involving communities from Jan-April and 69% during the period May-Aug. In part this was due to the number of meetings and assessments that occurred in the early stages and involved a degree of community participation, and because many agencies used external contractors for the actual implementation for purposes of speed. The number of shelter interventions where communities were informed only briefly or not at all dropped over time from 23% to 10%, which fits with this analysis.

There were differences in the type of participation that occurred, and what communities meant by their participation. Although it was difficult to draw out consistent conclusions, it did raise some important issues-

- There was a much higher level of consultation than participation in interventions. Three models of consultation were described: consultation with leaders only, with committee members and community representatives only, and with the general community. On 61 occasions community members raised the issue that the general community was not consulted. It was not uncommon for interventions such as distributions to occur without any form of consultation with the community and there were several examples cited, of items (such as tents, clothes, food and building materials) being dumped on roads by agencies without any communication whatsoever with the community.
- Characteristics of programmes displaying high levels of participation included interventions by groups that worked through their own constituencies only, such as religious, caste-based and women's groups, and those where the agency had previous contact with the community.
- There was a lower level of participation by specific groups, notably women, lower castes, minority groups and in villages where strong and exclusive committees dealt directly with agencies.
- Over time the level of participation in any one agency's response increased, e.g. the first interventions may have started with a meeting, the second with a survey and finally the programme, with the level of participation increasing throughout.
- When communities were consulted, they often felt that their views were not incorporated into the programme. Reasons for this were suggested and included issues of funding limitations and requests being made beyond agency mandates, but the prevailing feeling cited was that agencies had designed programmes prior to discussions with communities. Only in 3 examples did researchers find that communities felt they had influenced the design, or size of housing construction.
- Communities felt participation in interventions was on agencies' terms only, occurring when it was to their advantage, for example in order to reduce costs, or to provide community labour. -'We were consulted so that agencies could get the information to complete their paperwork only'. In the majority of interventions participation was not felt to be

advantageous to participants, or even considered desirable. This may reflect a previous culture of receiving and benefiting from interventions, rather than recognition of their role as active participants. Researchers noted that communities were unaware of housing construction sites or programme progress and felt that despite the early stage of construction and the houses not yet being allocated to individuals, there was a general lack of communication with communities- *'No one asked us how we wanted to participate, or if we wanted to'*

- Communities stated there was a lack of involvement in the identification and prioritisation of their needs, and decision making surrounding programming. Beyond immediate relief interventions, it was felt that most agencies ignored the need for livelihood support, although communities continuously and strenuously asserted that this was their primary need.

Community members were asked to choose one of five categories to describe their participation in interventions into - active participation in the interventions their management and administration, consultation by agencies with any suggestions being adopted, opinions asked but not incorporated into interventions, informed only, not informed about interventions. Some examples of each are included:

Table 4: Active participation in relief interventions

<b>1. Active Participation in interventions</b>
Payment for building work or items, hiring of labourers and engineer, collection of materials, attending meetings, provision of information, needs assessment.
Participants in construction programmes were paid to build, and engineers were provided to assist and monitor construction according to a fixed design.
A blanket distribution where women formed a committee, identified the most needy and distributed blankets to them
Specialist interventions such as a livelihood project in which weavers were taken to other areas to select cotton, and given assistance with marketing
Masons' training that led to employment and direct participation in construction programmes
<b>2. Consultation by agencies with any suggestions being adopted</b>
Distribution of larger tents after complaints over sizes
A housing program: that after explanation of the model, took suggestions, changed plans and design to incorporate communities suggestions within a set budget.
Siting of infrastructure such as cattle troughs, water tanks/pipelines, temporary schools
A women's insurance scheme, that at the request of men allowed them to participate
<b>3. Opinions asked but not incorporated into interventions</b>
Discussions over adoption
Locations and design of housing programmes,
Needs for livelihood interventions
<b>4. Informed only,</b>
Some distributions
Service delivery-water, medical, infrastructure
Adoption schemes
<b>5. Not informed about interventions</b>
Dumping of children's toys, tents, building materials

### 3.1 Recommendations made by the Community Members

Communities felt there should have been a greater level of participation in all stages of the response and made the following recommendations-

- Participation should occur in all stages of programming, particularly for housing interventions;
- There should be participation in decision making and design - not merely consultation;
- Agencies should adjust their programmes according to communities recommendations;
- There should be more information available about agency programmes, particularly about their limitations in order to foster a greater level of understanding and ensure realistic expectations.

#### 4. The Impact of the Response on Capacity and Vulnerability

In order to look at the impact of the response on local capacity, communities were asked in an exercise to rank their most important capacities (institutions, people, structures, contacts, physical assets) before, during, and after the earthquake. This facilitated an analysis of shifts that occurred in capacity as a result of the disaster. Although officially the traditional Panchayat and Sarpanch (village leader) were no longer recognised leaders, they were seen as the most important capacity in 20 communities during the earthquake and consequently acted as links for both government and NGO assistance, and represented community members.

*Table 5: Analysis of local capacities before, during and after the earthquake*

<b>Most important local capacities during earthquake (on day or first few days)</b>	<b>Nos of communities</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Community/religious/Panchayat leaders	43	To coordinate, manage and keep account of relief items
Teachers and children's worker	8	To assist with external contacts, writing and completing forms
Youth and youth groups	7	Assist with rescue and clearance of debris
Shop keepers	6	Supply of food and items-often on credit
Electricians / masons	7	
Postmen	3	To assist completing government compensation forms
Relief committee	6	Coordinated and managed relief distributions
Cooperatives-SEWA	6	
Local community organisations	5	Provided support in initial stage
Contacts with government	3	Assisted in obtaining assistance
Vehicles	28	For ambulances and external contact-obtaining relief
PHC / medical services	9	For first aid
Phones	10	For communication and arranging relief-in rural communities
Flour mill	9	To grind food aid
Communal hall	6	Meeting place, and accommodation for homeless

After the earthquake certain capacities were considered to be stronger than before the earthquake – and hence seem to have been strengthened by the relief programme. These included: leaders (in 33 communities), teachers (in 11), youth groups (5), electricians/masons (6), and pre-school (4). It is instructive to note that in 10 communities the capacity of leaders was considered to have reduced, or been undermined by the response, some had lost respect and influence due to reports of corruption in the distribution process. There were a higher numbers of phones, vehicles, and both numbers and members of savings and insurance groups as a result of the earthquake. Community halls were considered a stronger resource after the earthquake as other communal areas had been lost and houses had been destroyed.

There were reports of corruption, with communities stating they should have been consulted along with the leaders to ensure aid was distributed fairly. It was felt some committees were only interested in obtaining relief items, with no consideration of longer-term plans- *'our leader has built a new house with the relief items he stole and look at us we are living in tents still!'* On some occasions the role of the leaders was said to be motivated entirely by self-interest- *'the ex-sarpanch before had one car, but now has three -he has become important again!'*

Some Panchayat members revived relief committees which had existed in the past, and in doing so re-established their own power. In some communities this was seen as very temporary in duration and linked only to the initial response, with their strength reducing to the same or lower levels as before the earthquake in 7 of the communities.

#### **4.1 Reduction of vulnerability, and capacity-building interventions**

There were few examples of external agencies reducing vulnerability to future disasters. The main contribution was stated to be that of increasing awareness of the relief process itself, and the increased strength, influence and connectedness of leaders. A number of comments on this are recorded-

*'We are only becoming more used to disasters and relief, rather than being better prepared to cope with them or avoid them'* and

*'Now we know the names of the most important people at a high level, so can get help quicker in a time of disaster'*

People stated their vulnerability had been increased as they had lost savings, homes, employment, food stores and family members – it appears that few interventions had assisted long term recovery- *'there is no reduction in our vulnerability only increase. Now we have nothing, our savings are gone, our houses are gone. If there is another disaster I don't know what we will do.'*

Communities stated that their contact with the government, block-level administrators and relief agencies had increased their capacity to help themselves as it gave them the contacts that would assist them to call for assistance in case of another emergency. The increase in numbers of telephones illustrated the importance of access to external contacts and communication during a disaster. The distribution of contact lists, posters on housing design and booklets on the government rehabilitation packages were considered to have reduced vulnerability. Cash interventions in particular were reported as having increased peoples capacity to choose their own priorities and increase livelihood security, and were seen as especially useful when linked to rehabilitation of their own houses. Distribution of building materials allowed communities to decide on how to build and make their own decisions about the design and size of shelters.

Women stated their capacity and confidence had increased due to their involvement in the response and contact with outside agencies and those locally in higher profile positions such as leaders, teachers and pre-school staff. There was an increased awareness of the importance of savings and insurance schemes with new schemes being set up (evidence of 2-3 were seen), and with membership of established schemes having increased up to 100% in one community. Although livelihood interventions and training were seen to have increased capacity and

potentially reduced future vulnerability by allowing people to replace savings, in general they were seen as being aimed at skilled people only and those already engaged in such activities and as a result, didn't increase the number of skilled people overall. The lack of long-term support to re-establish livelihoods, particularly farming, housing construction, water supply (particularly to farms), within the response meant there was little or no lasting benefit to community members: they felt the response provided temporary relief only and had limited impact on rehabilitation and recovery- *'everything we have been given is now gone, when the food was eaten we had nothing.'*

To some extent this reflects the situation before the earthquake. In many areas in recent years, farming has failed annually although seed inputs were given, water was still seen as the limiting factor with little or no support given to increase supplies. Many agencies would have considered such rehabilitation interventions beyond the scope of emergency relief, hence limiting possible impact on reduction of vulnerability, and mitigation.

Despite the rhetoric of earthquake-proof housing, people did not feel that appropriate materials had been supplied in sufficient quantities to allow such constructions to be erected. Many of the communities fell within annual/biannual cyclone-affected areas and hence the threat of future cyclones was a very real possibility. Researchers observed that this issue was never mentioned and that the temporary, and semi-permanent structures that they witnessed were unlikely to survive strong winds, with several having collapsed within the first few months of construction. In this way, it is possible that vulnerability may have actually been increased.

#### **4.2 Undermining of Capacities by Agency Intervention**

There were several examples stated by communities of outside agencies undermining local capacity. The relocation process, for example, was felt to reduce overall community capacity as key infrastructure, institutions, connections, communal sites were lost, such as: temples, meeting places, electricity and water supplies, leaders houses, and contacts with neighbours. Important institutions such as festival committees, and youth groups would be disrupted by relocation.

Communities stated that when outside contractors were bought into communities to undertake housing construction there was limited involvement of local masons or labour, even when training had been provided. One agency trained masons employing them to work elsewhere, hence reducing local capacity to rebuild. Communities agreed they didn't have the skills to undertake some of the earthquake-proof housing projects but objected to outside contactors/staff being hired to undertake work they could do such as paperwork and unskilled building work.

The credibility of several DEC partner agencies had been eroded, according to communities, as they had made promises concerning shelter and other interventions that they were unable to keep. It was stated that this would affect the partner's credibility and capacity to work in the area in the future.

#### 4.1 Recommendations made by the Community Members-

- Water-harvesting structures are needed on farms and community water supplies should be re-established. The chronic water shortage must be addressed for recovery and reduction of future vulnerability;
- There should be greater consultation with communities over important local capacities that agencies could build and strengthen;
- Greater dissemination of contacts was desired, both for block and national level. Community telephones and emergency hotlines were suggested;
- Information on earthquake-proofing should be made more widely available and there should be training offered in order for communities to understand, not only masons and skilled people as the majority of people will be left to build shelters without professional assistance;
- Communities wanted more involvement in the whole relief process, in order that they understand it better and could better organise the response in the future;
- A relief committee should be formed/retained and responsibilities should be allocated in case of future emergency;
- One community shelter should be constructed which is earthquake and cyclone proof and which is supplied with first aid materials, rescue materials, stocks of water and communication equipment. There should also be several designated and trained first aid people in each community;
- The role of the Taluka level control room should be reinstated and reviewed;
- There should be assistance given to developing community-level contingency plans and to update those that exist already;
- Women stated that they wanted more information on insurance and access to savings schemes;
- There should be a focus on the links between livelihood and recovery, rehabilitation and reduction of vulnerability;
- There should be a greater focus on long term sustainable inputs by external/international agencies as in general the immediate needs appear largely to be taken care of by local or regional organisations

## 5. Treatment of Community Members by Agencies

Communities reported different levels of treatment during the response period. Initially, people in several badly-affected communities complained they had not been treated sensitively. External organisations would not accept that they were not interested in relief and needed time to grieve- *'we had not yet buried our dead and we were expected to stand in line to collect relief items, I refused to open my door - what use is food to the dead?'* Other comments were- *'staff were always rushing, in a hurry and pushing us to take things'* and *'at first we only wanted sympathy, not queues or things'*.

In the later stages of relief, after the initial contact with agencies had been made, communities generally felt they were treated more appropriately- *'NGO people gave relief very peacefully (shanti) and in an appropriate manner'* and *'the people that came were kind and helped us'*.

A common complaint concerned communication with agency staff, that things were not explained properly. Language was an issue with staff from other areas or from other countries; communities complained of a lack of dialogue and lack of introductions and said this made them feel bad as they did not know who gave them what and where things the relief items were coming from- *'we don't know the names of some of the agencies that came, we asked everyday, but they never gave their names, or some gave a card or name in English, they couldn't speak our language so we never knew who they were, so how can we tell you who gave us what'*.

This lack of information led to confusion over the purpose of some of the materials that appeared to have been dumped. Communities stated that they felt bad that they didn't understand what they were for or when they came. There was much confusion over the village adoption scheme and provision of cheques for compensation and people were uncertain where to go for assistance.

The processes used by agencies sometimes were felt to be inappropriate and to 'make people feel bad'. Some were considered unacceptable to certain groups, such as women and particular social groups, resulting in feelings of neglect and frustration- *'we felt bad when clothes were just thrown at us from trucks'*.

There were a small number of complaints about agencies ignoring customs and culture- *'how could I go and eat at the kitchen with higher caste families? I waited until they finished and then there was nothing left for my family'*. Two specific examples relating to accommodation and attire were consistently brought up by those interviewed. Women felt that their views were ignored or not even requested. Over the issue of relocation, many women stated they were not consulted and did not like the new plans. They were used to their neighbours and would lose space for their animals and water supplies. The privacy of their courtyards would be lost, and the housing was not in the traditional style or according to their custom. Many of the clothes distributed to women were seen as contrary to custom and culture.

**Ends**

*DMI/Hi/Mango*

**DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat**

**VOLUME THREE**

*Sector Reports*

**Report Two**

**Shelter**

**Kirtee Shah**, Honorary Director, Ahmedabad Study Action Group

**Section One: Introduction**

1. This evaluation report to DEC on the shelter component of the rehabilitation work by its partners is based on
  - Site visits in the project area (three visits in September and October, 2001)
  - Presentation by available members of the project teams
  - Discussion with implementing NGO teams
  - Informal interviews with beneficiary families
  - Interaction with randomly selected community and village leaders
  - Interaction with design consultants and contractors
  - Study of available agency reports
  
2. *It has not been possible to visit all projects or always meet the key members of the project team. Discussions with communities were generally unplanned, informal and not necessarily with representative groups. No systematic study or survey was conducted. This report, therefore, is predominantly impressionistic. That, however, is not seen as a major disadvantage as this exercise is not attempting a detailed or comprehensive evaluation of a particular project, agency or field partner. The intention is not to pass judgment on any one. It is to see the overall picture and to assess value and potential of the partners' effort in the overall sector response. Idea is also to learn lessons, improve performance to the extent possible and introduce correctives, wherever feasible.*

### **Section Two: Issues to be evaluated**

3. Both the end product and the process are important. In assessing the product our emphasis is on two aspects:
  - The convenience, functional appropriateness, ability to extend, and structural safety of shelter units and overall character of the rebuilt settlement (in situ or on a new site)
  - Asset value of houses (not only a place to live, also an economic asset)
4. The project assessment includes examining the following:
  - Approach to the task
  - Architectural and structural design and settlement plan
  - Unit cost per square foot, total cost of a house unit, overall project cost
  - Quality: structural strength, workmanship and detailing. Also overall character, living environment and space quality of a settlement
  - Backward - forward linkages in employment and income generation
  - Participation
  - Agency's attitude and response to the environmental factors: especially government policy, packages and procedures
  - Advocacy work
5. In evaluating the process, the assumption is that rehabilitation housing is not only replacement of what has been destroyed but reconstruction plus something. If DEC agencies or their partners subscribe to the Sphere Standards and Red Cross Code we assume this means that participation is attempted; local skills and resources are employed; women are given their due place in decision making and ownership share in new assets; local culture, tradition and belief patterns are given due weight and the process, besides producing new houses and settlements, capacitates people, strengthens communities and equips them to face such challenges with poise and live life with dignity.

### **Section Three: Extent of the reconstruction task**

6. Statistics presented by GSDMA, (Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority) in its state level advisory committee meeting in August 2001, seven months after the quake, provide a reasonable, if not comprehensive, picture of the overall housing task, government's involvement and NGO contribution and possible role. Out of 189,071 fully destroyed houses (27,007 of them in four towns) NGOs have assumed responsibility to construct only 8,568 units, 4.5% of the total. Out of the remaining fully destroyed houses (153,496) in rural areas, the huge majority (over 90%) will have to rebuild with the cash subsidy given by the government. The government has also distributed damage compensation to 88% (819,543 out of 968,246) partially damaged houses. Additionally, 60,676 families have been given tents, 141,000 tarpaulin and 146,950 plastic sheets. 217,316 corrugated iron sheets have been also distributed also.

7. Although the statistics do not tell the full story they draw the main contours of the housing task:
  - The number of new houses to be constructed is large (about 200,000)
  - Houses to be repaired and retrofitted are five times as many (almost a million)
  - NGO share in housing reconstruction is marginal less than 4.5% and unlikely to extend 10% of the total, even if fresh commitments are made and honoured
  - As government or its agencies are not constructing any houses for the disaster victims and NGO coverage is small, a very large number of houses (90% of the destroyed and damaged) will be constructed, repaired and retrofitted by the beneficiaries themselves.
8. These facts points to a ‘people driven’ rehabilitation strategy and has significant bearing on DEC partners’ choices, investment plans and action programmes.

#### **Section Four: Context**

9. The main features of the operating environment under which DEC partner agencies’ shelter response takes place include the following:
  - Size of the task: Over a million houses to be reconstructed , repaired and retrofitted; hundreds of school, health centre, anganwadi, panchayat buildings, community centres to be repaired, retrofitted and constructed; four towns (Bhuj, Bhachau, Rapar, Anjar) to be partially/ fully rebuilt
  - Coverage: There is a wide geographic spread in many districts (21), talukas (181) and villages (7633) plus the above four towns in Kutch district
  - Emergency: Nine months after the quake a majority of victims remain homeless, villages and towns razed, many livelihoods still at risk, and the local economy in shambles. There are frequent complaints of bureaucratic delay, and administrative inaction and corruption, which are supported by an often critical and hostile media.
  - Government: There is a dominant and assertive government presence with wide ranging policies, programmes and assistance packages; political compulsions and constraints and a reasonably open and accessible administration
  - Resources: There are sufficient financial resource from the central and state government, supported by local and international donations, and loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank
  - Institutions: World Bank and ADB have a large investment plan (US\$1.5 billion), relevant experience, and can exert considerable influence on government’s thinking, policies and programmes.
  - International NGOs in good numbers with experience, resources and agenda.

10. Local context:

- A variety of local NGOs from different parts of India: religion based, with political affiliations, business/industry promoted, philanthropic, professionals managed and motivated volunteers
- Local NGOs inclined to work together in partnership and connected through networks
- Vigilant, critical and demanding local press and other media organs
- Communities: resilient, generally cooperative and politically agile earthquake hit communities. Vocal and organized urban communities
  - Disasters: History of natural disasters in Gujarat, especially a succession of droughts, cyclone and earthquake in the recent past;
- Economy: Strained economy--agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and industry-- due to adverse environmental factors, recurrent natural disasters and general backwardness of the desert region
- Settlements: Rich heritage and tradition in built environment, especially in Kutch. Distinct morphology of rural settlements; local housing that is highly sensitive to the local climate, culture, and economy; skilled craftsmen; local materials (tiles and stone); and strong traditions of urban planning, urban design and civic spaces.
  - Services: There is a wide choices in professional services for architectural and structural design and settlement planning from across the country. Also national and international experts on earthquake safety

**Section Five: Issues and Choices**

11. The issues and choices for DEC partners in view of the above were:

- Strategic intervention or routine projects?
- Policy advocacy or fieldwork or both?
- Immediate results or long-term benefits?
- Construction or education?
- Communities or contractors?
- Urban, rural or both?
- Housing or development?

12. Also, what is the judicious use of limited financial and institutional resources in view of relative inexperience in the shelter field?

**Section Six: the Response**

13. Though diverse, the response has been predominantly project biased. Intervention has been less strategic and more routine. Advocacy is almost absent. Construction, especially new construction, not repair or retrofitting, is the main activity. Contractors, not communities, are principal builders. NGOs' involvement is almost exclusively rural as cities are omitted from

project activities. Partnership is often unidimensional. Plans, processes and products are mainly shaped by the consultants, often urban trained and biased, and unfamiliar with rural conditions. Innovations in design, technology and organizations are few. Costs, both construction and organizational, are routinely high. The products, both houses and new villages, leave much to be desired: in appropriateness of design, construction quality, architectural form, beneficiary satisfaction, employment benefits to communities, community empowerment and in laying pitch for long term development.

14. The effort, however, is not without its plus points. In each of the above areas there are strategic gains, good processes, satisfactory products and organizational innovations: examples are SCF and Abhiyan's partnership in temporary shelter; Action Aid and Unnati's advocacy work in Bhachau town development plan; and the concept and work of Abhiyan and Setu.
15. DEC partners' shelter rehabilitation work is diverse and mainly includes the following
  - Temporary shelter
  - Permanent housing: in-situ and relocation
  - Training, especially mason training
  - Education in earthquake safe construction
  - Material production (marginal)
  - Repair and retrofitting (marginal)
  - Advocacy in town planning (marginal)
16. The diversity in work is observed in the following forms
  - Nature of involvement
  - Size of projects
  - In-situ or relocation option
  - Process orientation
  - Extent, nature and result of participation
  - Quality focus
  - Beneficiary satisfaction
  - Stage of project development
  - Nature of partnership with government, NGOs, communities and other actors in the field
  - Financing pattern
  - Impact on policy and overall rehabilitation effort.

Temporary Shelter:

17. The work by Save the Children Fund / Abhiyan combination and Caritas in temporary shelter represents contrasting styles. Design, cost per unit, method of construction, recyclability of materials used, pattern of agency partnership and community participation differ substantially.
18. **SCF/Abhiyan.** Over 24,000 units were constructed in 250 villages through 21 partner agencies in six months by Abhiyan, in partnership with SCF. This shows how local NGO's

can scale up, marshal considerable managerial resources and materials (including 12 million mangalore tiles from Morbi, and 250,000 bamboos from Assam), and are then able to work with funders, suppliers, NGO/CBO partners and communities to complete this large operation on time. The cost was low at Rs. 4000 (£60) for a unit of 225 sq.ft, and the design was conducive to community-managed construction. The centralized supply of building materials (cement, bamboo, bamboo mats and tiles) and supervision by Abhiyan's partner agencies was cost effective. Beneficiaries are now generally satisfied, though a few would have preferred higher ceiling and different walling materials (instead of bamboo mats) to ensure privacy, safety, security and longer life. Considering that the temporary shelter is needed for a longer period (one or more years) until permanent houses are built, some want longer-lasting structures. A more significant benefit of the participatory method (in which beneficiaries dig foundations, raise plinths, and construct walls) is that it put the shocked communities to work. Investment in reusable materials (tiles and bamboo) indicates judicious use of available resources and a long-range strategy.

19. **Caritas** constructed over 10,000 temporary shelter units. The approach is in stark contrast to SCF/Abhiyan's. Each unit costs twice as much (Rs. 9000=£134). Contractors, not communities, built them. The plastic used in construction may cause a pollution problem in the long run. Though heat protection is inbuilt and care to details is noticeable (units are lockable, a strongly felt need of the homeless) there are adverse comments on the shape of the unit (semi-circular), discomfort due to inadequate cross ventilation and perceived fire hazard (no serious incidence is reported). Caritas' rationale for employing contractors include:

- Need for speed
- Wide coverage
- Lack of community base or contact in selected village
- Absence of 'local' NGO/CBO partners

The design, materials, cost and absence of community participation are direct consequence of contractor involvement.

20. **ActionAid/Unnati**. Although the number is small (500 units) the principle of minimum external intervention is characteristic of Action Aid/Unnati's approach to temporary shelter. The aim was to provide minimum financial assistance to facilitate self-help construction, "on their own site, of their own design, with their own efforts". Investment ranges between Rs. 2000 to Rs.6000 (£30-90). Visibility is low (no separate site, no distinct presence) but beneficiary satisfaction is high.

21. Though these efforts -and others not mentioned here- are not insignificant, DEC partners could have done more in this area. A reasonably secure and habitable temporary shelter contributes to recovery from the shock and encourages an early return to normal life while buying time so essential for the long-term rehabilitation planning process. DEC agencies were in the field early for the relief work, and had a better assessment of ground conditions and community's needs. They could have played a more informed advocacy role in relation to temporary shelter at a stage when the government was undecided. As the cost is small and the product is simple, with resources at their disposal, even if delivery was managed through

contractors, they could both have provided much needed assistance and played a useful role in policy and programme development.

### **Relocation Projects**

22. Shifting a village to a new site is inherently more difficult as it entails overcoming community resistance, finding an acceptable new site, handling complex socio-political-divisions among groups and subgroups, satisfying different interest lobbies and incorporating existing diversity in the new design. It is also a comparatively higher cost option. Following the earthquake an overwhelming majority of villages rejected government's earlier invitation and option to relocate. Not many DEC partners have opted to work in relocation villages as it requires organizational capacity and preparedness for deeper involvement in community processes, design and construction work, and elaborate post-construction resettlement and readjustment process etc.
23. **FICCI-CARE's** involvement in Moti-Chirai is an organizational challenge. Though a consultative design process was attempted, neither the house designs nor the new layout -a grid-iron pattern of suburban variety- reflect successful resolution of complex caste and sub-group issues. The village is divided into two/three sites. The layout design prepared by a Delhi-based consultant was rejected by the community. A new layout has been designed by a community-appointed consultant. The contractor was uncertain which plan to follow, did not know, at the time of site visit how many houses will be constructed, had not seen the service layout and did not know who would provide and pay for them. Stronger elements in the village are reported to have assumed control. Neither the agency, nor contractor, nor community groups expressed confidence in the outcome.
24. An international agency is better advised to avoid the high risks of a relocation project, especially as it is the community's internal dynamics and political under-currents, more than the agency's professional skill and rational factors that determine the outcome. If the challenge of relocation is to be accepted an adequate professional support, both on the design and social side, is a precondition. A prolonged involvement, in pre-planning, design, construction and post construction settlement is unavoidable. An inadequate response on these issues could result in failure, both for the community and the agency.

### **Permanent Housing**

25. In view of the required scale and speed of construction of new permanent houses DEC partners' response is evidently marginal. However, in strategic positioning, product quality and potential impact it has many interesting features.

26. **FICCI-CARE**'s permanent housing programme is relatively ambitious with diverse involvement. The plans include

- Construction of over 10000 new houses, in-situ and on relocation sites
- Mason training -skill upgrading in earthquake safe construction for the practicing masons and skill training for unskilled workers including women) in collaboration with a cement company, Ambuja Cement
- Material production units (hollow concrete blocks) as an income generating enterprise, assisted by Development Alternatives.

Other features of the FICCI-CARE approach are an absence of local NGO partners in construction, and a tripartite partnership between government, FICCI-CARE and communities in financing project and construction through contractors. FICCI-CARE had a diverse activity mix (construction, training, income supplementation, material production), which displayed interesting potential.

27. **EFICOR (TearFund)** hired the services of a Delhi-based NGO consultant (a partnership that started in Latur), for its village reconstruction projects, used a special (and alien) technology in roof construction, employed a Bombay based contractor, and is spending Rs. one lakh (about £1,430) per house. It has invested its own funds and employed no local person -skilled or unskilled- in construction. By contrast, **Action Aid / Unnati** working in the village of Lunva, depends largely on community contribution (mainly damage compensation received from the government plus some savings and borrowings). They have confined their involvement to assistance in design, arranging community consultation, mason training, guidance in earthquake-safe construction, arranging skilled construction labour, and quality supervision. No contractor is involved, there is no direct cash subsidy, and a mason was used in the place of a qualified engineer as site supervisor. There was also effective community participation.

28. Some of the 'participatory construction' projects require beneficiaries to contribute unskilled labour in ongoing construction work carried out by contractors (digging foundation, carrying bricks, watering walls). Christian Aid's partner **Manas** has erected steel-frame structures with mangalore-tiled roof through a contractor and left construction of walls and providing doors and windows to the community. The construction method and phasing of work ensures speedy construction, cost saving, and effective participation.

29. Concern's partner **Nav Sarjan** is concentrating mainly on its traditional constituency of Dalits and attempting to convert a part of the subsidy into a loan to be recovered in a community revolving fund. Another Concern partner, Gram Vikas Trust, has confined its contribution to 5 to 10 bags of cement, 5 days of mason wages and some food for work per unit. Helpage International has confined its housing intervention to building a small room for the aged. Diversity in agencies' work is manifest in size of houses, house cost and unit cost of construction, use of materials, nature and quality of participation and very different degrees of beneficiary satisfaction.

## **Section Seven: General Observations**

30. **Design.** Adequate size (traditional village houses are big as they are both home and store for farmers and home and workshop for handicraft workers), lower cost (limited funds), structural safety against earthquake and cyclone threat, easy and structurally safe extendibility (as agencies provide only a `core` house, extension by the owner is necessary), and protection against both heat and cold are some of the main considerations in the design of a house.
31. A typical rural house in Kutch and Saurashtra consists of three space components: a core living and storage space, semi-covered verandah and enclosed open-to-sky yard in front or rear. The agency focus is mainly on the core component -a room. Some designs incorporate a verandah. But the `overall house concept` is rarely observed in the consultant's design drawings or construction plan. The design professional's urban education, bias and experience and lack of exposure to rural communities, their needs and living habits are also reflected in the design.
32. **Cost.** Not much conscious effort is visible in cost-saving, except for elaborate work by Abhiyan in the form of design development (architectural and structural), material options, detailing and construction management method. There is a wide range in the cost of DEC partners' projects -Rs 380/£6 per sq.ft. in Raidhanpar (Caritas), Rs. 318/£5 per sq.ft in Moti Chirai (FICCI-CARE), Rs. 130/£2 per sq.ft. in Abhiyan's Bhunga, and Rs. 610/£9 per sq.ft. for a Health Centre at Ratnal (Merlin). This shows that cost reduction is possible without compromising on construction area, earthquake safety and quality. It appears that neither the clients (DEC partners) nor the professionals engaged by them have accorded priority to the cost factor. Agencies' lack of experience in construction, professionals' lack of orientation in low cost materials, technology and construction methods, the absence of cost ceiling and standards and cost monitoring procedures are resulting in higher costs. It may be mentioned here that these costs do not include consultant fees, agency overheads, and land and services costs.
33. Not only the unit cost of construction (cost per sq.ft.), but also the size and cost of a unit also vary substantially. FICCI-CARE's house in Moti Chiari is 324 sq.ft. and costs Rs. 1,02,930 (£1536). Abhiyan's Bhunga design is 230 sq.ft. and costs Rs 29,870 (£446) including community contribution of Rs. 5560 (£83) in cash and labour. World Vision's 322 sq.ft. house is estimated to cost Rs. 1,44,000 (£215). EFICOR's 325 ft. house costs Rs. 89000 (£133). Rs. 45000 (£67) is earmarked for a 210 – 230 sq. ft. house by many agencies. The size variation is about 100 sq.ft. (between 250 to 350 sq.ft.) and the cost varies between Rs. 30,000 (£45) to Rs.1,44,000 (£2115). Specifications obviously vary and determine cost. However, all units are of pucca (using proper materials) variety and on earthquake safety there is no compromise. Absence of standards and budgetary control, lack of conscious efforts to reduce cost and reluctance to learn from each other account for wastage and in most cases higher costs.

34. **Incremental Design.** Orientation, experience and skill required in designing a 'growing' house (or 'incremental house') are generally lacking. As what is built now is a core house, only a part of what the beneficiary needs, its "extendibility" is important. A good incremental design permits extension without much breaking, and functional efficiency at each growth stage. It also requires proper detailing to enable future extension with structural safety. Both consciousness and effort is generally lacking. Abhiyan's design cell is working on this aspect.
35. **Earthquake Safety.** A Good effort has been made by most DEC partners both to incorporate earthquake-safe features in both houses already built and under construction and to support local capacity building through mason training. In what appears to be a one-off case, Concern's partner, Gram Vikas Trust, possibly due to budgetary constraints with a total investment per unit of less than Rs. 2000 (£30), is not paying attention to this aspect.
36. Earthquake and cyclone safety cannot be compromised. However, in construction work the suggested methods of earthquake-safe construction (three RCC bands, corner strengthening, etc.) is perceived as bottleneck. Some mystification has also crept in. For smaller structures the cost of earthquake resistant features is relatively high. Adoption of this technique requires special educational effort and organizational energy. Though the release of compensation instalments from the government has been made conditional on the use of seismically safe construction methods, the adoption level by communities is not very high. Mason training is useful but not sufficient to ensure safety. Though the need for earthquake-safe design is high in the public memory, in contrast the cyclone threat is generally ignored in design and construction. Adoption of safe construction technique is a major problem in the self-help construction schemes under which a majority of houses will be built. Besides mason training DEC partners can help with developing low cost easy-to-construct options.
37. **Sanitation.** The area of a typical house ranges between 250 to 350 sq.ft. Room, verandah and kitchen are the main components. The verandah, however, in most cases, is small by rural standards (absent in village Raidhanpar and quite spacious in Navsarjan villages). Some agencies are providing bathrooms but not many have opted for a toilet. If rehabilitation is reconstruction plus, there is a good case of the inclusion of a toilet and bathroom unit, and improved sanitation could be a common feature of all rehabilitation housing. In many villages today land for open defecation is scarce and at a long distance due to peripheral growth. The toilet is a priority for women, old people, and children.
38. Provision of toilets and bathrooms, even against initial reluctance and hesitation, is an important step in improving quality of rural living. Proper improvement will also require the provision of a low cost and easy- to-maintain twin pit latrine system. Advocacy is also needed to link up existing rural sanitation projects, government or non-government, with the on-going rehabilitation housing work and help secure the necessary funds for this work.
39. **Water Conservation.** Not many DEC agency projects have developed a response to water scarcity in the area. Rainwater harvesting is not integrated in the design or work plan. A simple device called Paniara, which reduces water contamination and waste is not often

integrated in design (exceptionally, it was observed in Navsarjan self-constructed houses). A toilet pan design which conserves water, developed by PRI, is not in circulation.

40. **In-situ Construction.** The logic of in-situ construction, where houses are to be built on existing plots (different sizes, varying bay width, organic pattern), is violated as a prototype design is repeated without site-specific modifications. The opportunity of reconstruction is not sufficiently used to decongest areas, widen narrow streets and roads, open up spaces for community building and courts and create civic spaces.
41. **Salvage Materials.** Not many agencies are attempting creative use of salvage materials. This would save cost and provide larger houses. Using salvaged material requires orientation, flexibility in design and a strategy. EFICOR's consultant Development Alternatives has prepared a detailed inventory of beneficiaries' salvaged material but not much is in evidence in the design or ongoing work.
42. **Professional Consultants.** The professional consultants engaged to render architectural and structural design and construction management services play a key role in determining nature and quality of the project. Size of unit, design, cost, materials, specifications, method of construction, etc. are usually determined by the professionals. Many professionals engaged for the work are urban in residence, orientation, training and attitude. Many have no rural experience or exposure. The participatory way of working is not part of their training. Cost consciousness is not their attitude. Poor people or villagers are seldom their client. Human development as an integral part of settlement development is not part of their professional work.
43. Experienced and 'development' oriented consultants are also involved. HUDCO has been engaged by FICCI-CARE and Development Alternatives by EFICOR. The Unnati team includes professionals with many years of experience in post-disaster reconstruction. Abhiyan team has relevant experience, ability to attract young professionals with motivation and a systematic way of training. Their orientation and experience reflect in approach to the task, design quality, construction method, construction cost and beneficiary satisfaction.
44. Quality and cost of services is often determined by the distance a consultant is located from the field. Both HUDCO and DA are Delhi-based. DA has engaged a field team consisting of professionals from Delhi. A senior team member visits the field twice a month for monitoring and supervision. HUDCO did not have a local team to guide and participate on a regular basis in Moti Chirai and this was one of the reasons for some of the difficulties in planning of this village.
45. **Advocacy.** Rehabilitation of shelter and settlements is subject to and controlled by government policies, assistance packages and sanction procedures. Various government departments, agencies and systems are involved in damage assessment, implementation and decision-making. Multiple stakeholders are playing various roles. Therefore a lot needs to change in government policy, packages and procedures; method and technique of earthquake-safe construction, entitlements, plan approval procedures, etc.

46. Advocacy is probably the weakest part of the DEC involvement. Both international agencies and their local NGO partners are doing little in this matter. With their status, experience, access to resources and partnership with some of the influential local NGOs they could effectively intervene on policy, organizational design and procedural matters. Putting advocacy work on the agenda, closer relationship and sharing between DEC agencies and field partners and systemic sharing with other concerned agencies would ensure much better results.
47. **Towns.** Besides reconstruction of villages and social and physical infrastructure, a special feature of Gujarat earthquake rehabilitation is the need for almost complete reconstruction of four quake-ravaged towns. A large investment in infrastructure and shelter is planned. Planning work for Bhuj, Bhachau, Anjar and Rapar is in progress. How effective is the reconstruction and what role these towns play in the socio economic development of the region will be influenced by these plans
48. Action Aid/Unnati has mobilized public opinion on the provisions of draft development plan for Bhachau town prepared by a private consultant and has played a lead role in influencing-change in favour of the poor and unorganized. In its consultation work Unnati found that secure land tenure is a strongly felt need of several communities in Bhachau which had lived in the city for years but were still unauthorized. But this is the exception: very few DEC partners are active in Kutch towns. Much needs to be done to influence development plan and investment decisions.
49. **Employment and income.** EFICOR's construction programme in village Nagavaldia includes construction of 288 houses, each unit costing Rs. 89,000 (£133). Out of an approximate investment of Rs. 3 crore (£448,000) only 10% will be spent on unskilled labour and Rs. 50-60 lakhs (£75,000) on skilled labour. While a Bombay-based contractor constructs houses and produces blocks and roofing systems, local people -mostly poor following destruction by the quake and jobless following an erratic monsoon- are unable to earn anything from the investment. Should not such a large investment create some jobs for local people?
50. Internalizing the benefits of such employment for a concerned village community should be a project objective. This can be done in two ways-
- By inserting a clause in the agreement with the contractor to employ local unskilled labour.
  - By involving local people in the whole process of building.
- The current projects give insufficient attention to this issue, and there is therefore a need to set local employment targets as well as construction targets..

## **Conclusions**

51. There are clear needs to improve the quality of houses under construction, especially with respect to improved designs, greater cost-efficiency, effective community participation, better coordination with consultants and systematic effort for capacity building of partners. A few good projects could lift the tone of the entire operation, and given the current status of rehabilitation work these are badly needed. With the human and financial resources at their disposal DEC agencies could assume a leadership role in respect of housing.
52. Equally important is to focus on strategic issues- advocacy, towns, organizational innovations, the employment link to housing, and construction 'resource management'. Though what and how to do it is each partner agency's choice, one way to get started is to view the on-going evaluation exercise as an opportunity for the DEC to form a collective view and to plan mid-course corrections in strategy and design. In this respect the DEC's time-extension can be seen as an opportunity.

## **DEC Evaluation: The Earthquake in Gujarat**

### **VOLUME THREE**

#### *Sector Reports*

#### **Report Three**

## **Financial Management**

Alex Jacobs, **Mango**, December 2001

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This evaluation considers the financial management of the response of DEC member agencies to the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001.

The DEC raised £19m of pooled funds for the survivors of the Gujarat earthquake. This evaluation has taken a broad view of financial management, looking at strategic questions of resource allocation as well as operational questions of financial systems. It is based on interviews with member agency staff, not detailed testing of each member agency's systems.

#### **The nine key findings of the evaluation are:**

- 1. There was a mis-match between the amount of funds raised, the DEC time limit for expenditure and the needs of beneficiaries. Many member agencies had more money available than they could responsibly spend in nine months.**
- 2. Resources have been allocated between member agencies with limited efficiency.**
- 3. Member agencies have allocated resources internally with different levels of efficiency.**
- 4. Member agencies have operated with different levels of cost-efficiency.**
- 5. Financial administration and control has been of a robust professional standard in both member agencies and NGO partners.**
- 6. NGO partners have maintained professional levels of financial administration, control and accountability.**
- 7. NGO partners have been accountable to the DEC for the funds that they have received. Some have also given financial account to beneficiaries.**
- 8. Member agencies and NGO partners have involved programme managers in financial management. (It has not been 'left to the accountant'.)**
- 9. Field and head office staff of DEC members have not always understood the DEC's role and operating procedures.**

Findings one to four: strategic issues.

The DEC imposed a nine-month time scale for initial project implementation, ending on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001. By that date, DEC member agencies had spent £2.5m on emergency relief. £8.5m had been spent on rehabilitation projects. £0.2m had been spent on DEC direct costs. £7.7m had not been spent: 41% of the total. It is expected that most of this will be spent on on-going rehabilitation activity.

The focus on rehabilitation made the Gujarat response very different to many other humanitarian responses. In financial terms, DEC member agencies have been minor players in a much larger relief and rehabilitation effort which runs to billions of dollars. Moreover, mechanisms in India for relief and rehabilitation have been shown to be very strong.

Some members quickly and effectively matched their distinctive strengths to the needs of the affected population and the local context. Others had difficulty achieving appropriate strategic focus, resulting in highly variable standards of overall efficiency and impact. The nine-month time scale significantly exacerbated these difficulties.

Findings five to nine: operational issues.

Generally, financial management practice was of a robust professional standard on the ground. Appropriately qualified staff were recruited for key financial management positions. Reflecting the commitment of senior managers, this has been the cornerstone of field level financial management.

Member agencies implemented practical financial systems in the field, resulting in professional financial administration, control and reporting. This allowed them to track funds from the DEC appeal through to expenditure, and to provide an accurate account of how funds have been spent. Some member agencies also developed ways of giving financial account to beneficiaries.

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## **1. Introduction**

This evaluation reviews the financial management of the response of DEC member agencies to the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001. It was commissioned by the DEC secretariat in June 2001. The DEC Gujarat appeal was launched on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February. To date, it has raised £24m. This comprises £19m of pooled funds and £5m of retained funds.

A donation is 'retained' if an individual donor specifies that his/her donation is to a particular member agency. It is passed to the member agency, and not available for distribution through the DEC. All other donations are 'pooled' and are available to be shared between member agencies. Only pooled funds are subject to the expenditure conditions agreed through the DEC secretariat. Retained funds are subject to internal procedures within member agencies, and the line of accountability runs directly from the agency to their own donors. This evaluation only covers pooled funds.

The eleven DEC member agencies who received funds from the DEC from this appeal were: ActionAid, the British Red Cross Society, CARE, Christian Aid, Concern, Help the Aged, Merlin, Oxfam, Save the Children, Tearfund and World Vision. The table “Summary Financial Statement” shows how funds were distributed between member agencies.

The terms of reference for this evaluation specified that the team should look at financial management in detail, including “the total picture of DEC spend”, reviewing:

- “volume of funds allocated under the major DEC programme budget heads.”
- “robustness of the systems for allocating and tracking spend from the Appeal phase through to the beneficiaries via the different members including their systems of financial monitoring and reporting.”

The terms of reference also required that “the evaluation should make recommendations to the DEC Secretariat and Members about the financial framework for raising, budgeting, allocating and monitoring the appeal funds”.

This evaluation has taken a broad view of financial management. It has considered financial management at the strategic and the operational levels. The strategic level has included looking at questions of resource allocation between DEC member agencies and within member agencies. The operational level has included looking at the nuts and bolts of financial administration, control and reporting.

The report is organised around nine key findings. The most general, strategic findings are given first, leading on to findings about more detailed, operational aspects of financial management. Key recommendations have been integrated into the overall DEC evaluation report.

## **2. Methodology**

This evaluation is based on semi-structured interviews with staff from DEC member agencies and their partners in Britain and in India, carried out from August to October 2001. It was led by Alex Jacobs (from the UK) and assisted by Nimish Shah (a prominent chartered accountant from Gujarat). The two evaluators discussed systems and issues with a wide range of finance staff and managers from all of the DEC agencies and a sample of partners.

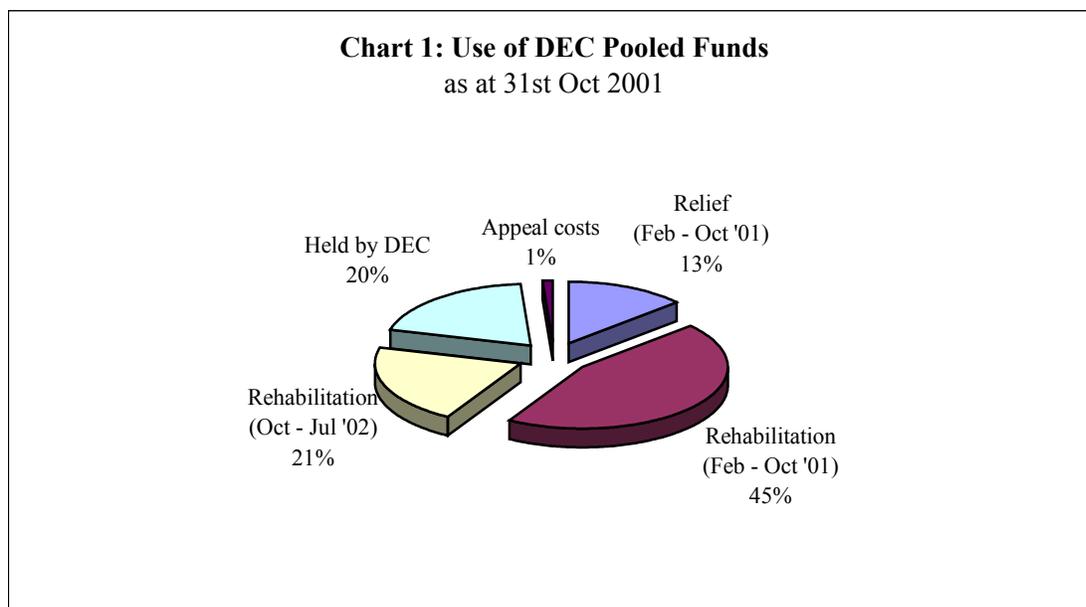
Due to time constraints, only key systems were reviewed, and then only briefly. Testing them fully would have been an immense job, outside the scope of the evaluation. This evaluation is not an audit of DEC member agencies. The evaluators have largely relied on the goodwill and candour of agency staff. They are extremely grateful for the time that agency staff made available and for the wide-ranging insights so generously shared with them.

### 3. Findings

#### Finding one

There was a mis-match between the amount of funds raised, the DEC time limit for expenditure and the needs of beneficiaries. Many member agencies had more money available than they could responsibly spend in nine months.

#### 3.1.1 Evidence



1. From 1<sup>st</sup> February to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001, the DEC appeal raised £19m of pooled funds. Only £11m was requested by member agencies for this nine-month period, comprising £2.5m for emergency relief (13% of the appeal total) and £8.5m for rehabilitation programmes (45% of the appeal total). In addition, the DEC secretariat incurred £0.2m of appeal related costs. £7.8m (41% of the appeal total) had not been requested by agencies to be spent in the initial nine-month period.
2. Five member agencies have requested a total of £4m (21% of the appeal total) to spend in the next nine month period (1<sup>st</sup> November 2001 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2002). This leaves approximately £3.7m (20% of the appeal total) held by the DEC which had not been requested by agencies at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001.
3. Most member agencies disbursed funds to local partner organisations. On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001 a number of partner organisations held unspent DEC funds. So it is reasonable to conclude that a minimum of 41% of the appeal total had not been spent at the end of the nine month period, and as much as 50% may not have been spent.
4. The £5m of retained funds raised through the DEC appeal were not subject to any time-limit imposed by the DEC secretariat. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of retained funds were held back, to be used after the time-bound funds had been spent. This means that it is likely that the majority of retained funds had not been spent by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001.

### 3.1.2 Context

- Significant short-term funds were available to many DEC member agencies from DfID and ECHO. These funds were tied to emergency relief activities and much shorter time frames than the DEC (three months for DfID), and were often made available within days of the earthquake. Many agencies used them to fund the first months of emergency relief response, not DEC funds.
- The DEC appeal raised £19m of pooled funds: a large amount compared to other DEC appeals, and approximately 20% of the total funds spent by DEC member NGOs and their sister organisations. The sheer volume of DEC funds made it difficult to spend them all in a tight timeframe. In addition, member agencies raised significant funds from other sources, including their own appeals and from sister organisations. For some agencies, these funds were much greater than DEC funds.
- Local coping mechanisms were strong, with DEC member agencies only contributing a small proportion of overall emergency relief or longer-term rehabilitation assistance. The government, the army, local civil society (including businesses and NGOs) and local communities all played the major role in meeting earthquake victims' immediate needs. While many villages suffer great poverty, Gujarat is the second wealthiest state in India. Significant community support has swung into action for reconstruction. In addition, by the end of March 2001, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank had committed loans of almost \$1bn for reconstruction with the promise of substantial additional funds to come.
- It is very hard to deliver rehabilitation assistance in a nine-month period. Effective rehabilitation interventions need real community participation, which takes time to set up and more time to support. Nine months is almost always too short for this. It is well recognised that truncated interventions can cause more harm than good.
- There was confusion about the roles of district and state level government, with co-ordination at one level being over-ridden at the other. This took time to resolve. Local government then took several months to allocate specific construction projects to member agencies, and to approve designs. This delayed many agencies' programmes.

### 3.1.3 Impact

A compromise had to be found between the DEC's nine-month time constraint and the operating realities. All DEC members struggled with this issue to a greater or lesser extent.

Some member agencies used DEC money to fund the opening months of a longer intervention (e.g. WV, Concern). This approach makes it hard to link DEC funding to specific outputs, as projects started with DEC funds will be completed using funding from other sources.

Other member agencies squeezed rehabilitation activities into a short timeframe with varying degrees of success and efficiency (e.g. Merlin, CARE). For instance, CARE used DEC funds to hire tractors for mechanical ploughing. This met an immediate need. But, as CARE field staff pointed out, was a short term, non-sustainable solution which carries the serious risk of increasing the dependency of beneficiaries on external intervention. CARE field staff contrasted

this approach to the sustainable intervention of creating seed-banks, but explained that the nine-month time limit made this community based approach impossible.

Some member agencies took DEC funds and were not able to spend them in the time available (e.g. Oxfam, BRCS, SCF). This led to the initial time constraint being over-ridden. These agencies, along with ActionAid and Merlin, came to a compromise with the DEC, negotiating extensions. This could be seen as an appropriate action to use funds for the maximum benefit of earthquake victims, rather than being bound by an artificial time limit. But in some cases inappropriate planning was the root of the mis-match between the amount of funds taken and the time needed to use them responsibly. (See findings two and three.)

Some member agencies seemed to be able to work effectively with this constraint (Help Age, Christian Aid). All member agencies invested significant time and effort in dealing with this question. The nine-month time limit acted as an artificial constraint, cutting directly across agencies' operating reality. Almost all managers in the UK and in Gujarat expressed great frustration with the time limit during evaluation interviews. It created additional stress in an already stressful and difficult working environment.

For example, there was wide-ranging debate in the field (at co-ordination meetings culminating in the Ghandidham meetings) and in the UK. Field managers had to spend time thinking about how to handle the artificial constraint, instead of how to run effective programmes.

### **3.1.4 Comment**

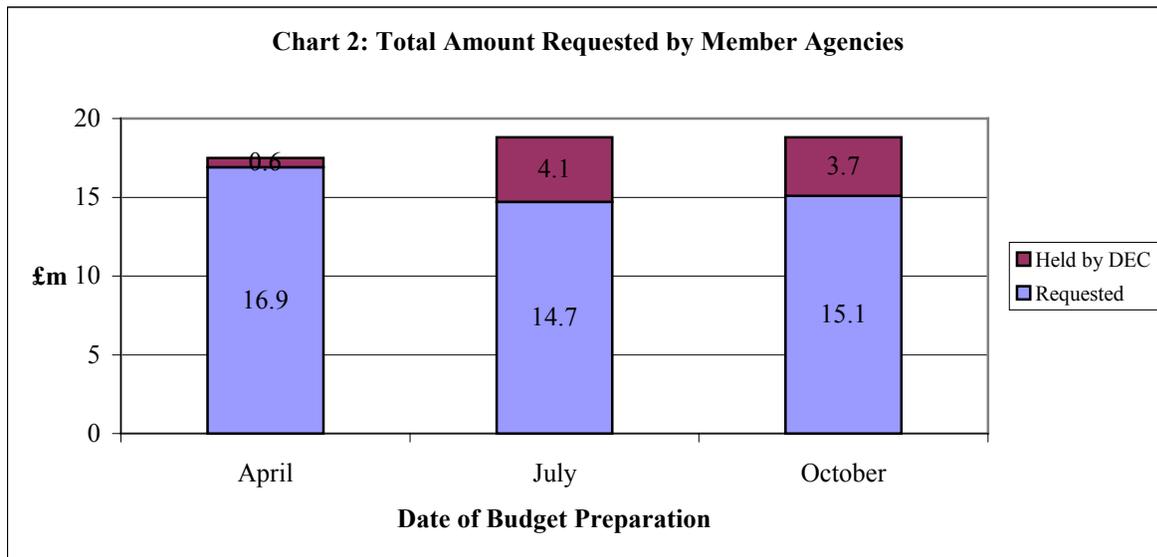
Given the context of the strength of civil society in India in general and in Gujarat specifically, it was never likely that member agencies would run a 'classic' humanitarian response, in which they and the UN take the lead in providing basic services to a displaced population, largely in the absence of other major sources of assistance. Many agencies took time to recognise and to get to grips with the implications of this context.

Equally, it appears that the DEC was unable to respond flexibly enough to the situation on the ground. If the DEC exists to do more than provide immediate humanitarian support then the nine-month limit must be reviewed.

### **Finding two**

Resources have been allocated between member agencies with limited efficiency.

### 3.2.1 Evidence



1. At the end of April 2001, three months after the appeal was launched, £17.5m of DEC pooled funds was available to the members. This was initially allocated using the Indicator of Capacity mechanism (details below). At this stage, the budgets drawn up by member agencies show a total request for DEC funds of £16.9m, leaving £0.6m of funds held by the DEC: **3% of the total**.
2. At the end of July 2001, six months after the appeal was launched, an additional £1.5m had been received, bringing the total DEC pooled funds available up to £19m. £0.2m of costs had been incurred by the DEC secretariat in support of the appeal. So £18.8m was available for distribution to member agencies. At this stage, revised budgets drawn up by member agencies show a total request for DEC funds of £14.7m, leaving £4.1m held by the DEC: **22% of the total**.
3. The end of October 2001 is the end of the nine-month time limit for expenditure of DEC funds. At this stage, the most recent budgets drawn up by member agencies show a total request for DEC funds of £15.1m. The DEC is still holding £3.7m of funds, which have not been requested by members for field projects: **20% of the total**.
4. Over this period, some agencies had significantly adjusted their plans. (See finding three below.) In April 2001, Oxfam requested their full Indicator of Capacity allocation of £4.4m. In July 2001, they reduced this to £1.6m. Subsequently, they negotiated an additional £1m of funding to be spent over an extended period up to the end of July 2002, taking their total request for DEC funds to £2.6m.
5. Over the same period, other agencies could have spent more than they were initially allocated by the Indicator of Capacity mechanism. ActionAid, Help the Aged and World Vision all requested additional funds in excess of their Indicator of Capacity allocation.

6. Due to a shortage of funds, HelpAge India reduced the number of their beneficiaries from 7,500 (for distribution of relief goods) to 1,575 (for shelter and livelihood rehabilitation activities). This change in numbers directly reduced the impact of their rehabilitation work. It also increased the costs, as a second needs-assessment exercise had to be carried out to identify the rehabilitation beneficiaries.
7. Beneficiaries had needs that were not been met within the initial nine-month period.

### 3.2.2 Context

- Estimates of the total amount of pooled funds available from the appeal increased from £15m after one month to £17.5m after three months to £19m after six months.
- The initial allocations of funds are made according to the established Indicator of Capacity mechanism. This calculates a crude 'Indicator of Capacity' for each UK based member agency based on their world-wide expenditure over the previous three years. DEC member agencies have regularly discussed this mechanism. It is simple to implement and allows quick decision-making in the immediate aftermath of a humanitarian disaster. But, it does not take account of any variation of local operating capacity in different countries.
- When the earthquake struck, HelpAge India had an established programme and partners in India. Concern were in the process of opening a country office. Merlin had never operated in India before. The Indicator of Capacity mechanism takes no account of these important differences in local operating capacity.
- World Vision UK contributed £1.3m of DEC funds to a total earthquake response programme of approximately £12m run by World Vision India; the British Red Cross Society contributed £2.4m of DEC funds to appeals totalling £35m for programmes implemented by the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Indian Red Cross Society; and CARE UK contributed £1.2m of DEC funds to a total programme of approximately £20m run by CARE India. However, the amount of DEC funds allocated to World Vision UK, the BRCS and CARE UK was calculated on the basis of expenditure of these UK organisations. This bears only a limited relationship to the capacity of worldwide networks of organisations to run programmes in India.
- Not all member agencies took their entire Indicator of Capacity allocation. Christian Aid, Merlin and Tearfund all requested less than their allocation. All agencies have been aware that additional funds were available above their Indicator of Capacity allocations.
- Different member agencies took different attitudes to using DEC funds. Some (notably Oxfam) appeared to act on the basis that they had an obligation to take the entire amount that they were initially allocated. For others, the amount of funding available significantly influenced the shape (as well as the scope) of their response (e.g. Merlin).
- Different member agencies have different mandates and different approaches to their work. They do different things. Different humanitarian disasters require different responses. In the early days of a disaster, when an appeal is launched, it is difficult to judge how the response will evolve, and which activities will be most appropriate.

### 3.2.3 Impact

A great deal has been achieved, with eleven member agencies implementing a wide range of programmes to assist the survivors of the Gujarat earthquake. Approximately £3m of emergency relief was distributed in the first weeks and months after the earthquake. Approximately £13m of rehabilitation programmes are on-going, meeting needs across the state.

However, some funds have been sitting unused, while beneficiaries have needs that have not been met. At the end of October, this amounted to £3.7m, 20% of the total amount of pooled available to DEC member agencies.

### 3.2.4 Comment

The first weeks of an emergency humanitarian response are always chaotic. Information is scarce and confusing, and needs are overwhelmingly urgent. In these conditions, it is not realistic to expect a perfectly efficient distribution of resources.

Furthermore, there is no direct feedback mechanism between the level of funds raised and the level of funds required. The amount of income raised is determined by the degree to which the British and Irish public wish to give, and heavily influenced by the media. This bears no relation to the ability of member agencies to spend money responsibly in the field (within the time constraints laid down). Reflected through media lenses, it may only bear a limited relation to the needs of beneficiaries. Within the operating context of this disaster, the additional £1.5m funds raised between April and July constituted a problem for member agencies, as much as an opportunity. It was more money to spend in an already tight time frame.

This specific issue was resolved through the pragmatic fund-closing mechanism. However, the principle remains: when the whole DEC apparatus swings into action and an appeal is launched, it is not always clear what the needs are, how agencies can best respond, and as a result how much money they really need. A DEC appeal is a very powerful tool for responding to disasters. It ensures a minimum level of resources. But, it is not surprising that a surplus of funds is raised for some disasters and a deficit for others.

However, DEC member agencies have an obligation to attempt to distribute resources as efficiently as possible between them. This is a direct application of two fundamental principles: (a) the moral and legal obligation to use funds as donors intended them to be used (the terms of this DEC appeal were to “help the survivors” of the Gujarat earthquake), and (b) the first principle of the Red Cross Code of Conduct: the humanitarian imperative comes first.

In order to achieve the overall objective of the DEC, these principles have to over-ride individual organisational priorities (such as the perceived need to maximise an organisation’s own funding and organisational activity). Most member agencies accept that the needs of beneficiaries are not always best served by an organisationally specific response – and that they as an individual agency are not always best placed to respond to all needs in every emergency.

The current Indicator of Capacity mechanism does not encourage member agencies to consider the total amount of funds available as a resource for the united British and Irish humanitarian agencies to use collectively in the best interest of beneficiaries. Funds are automatically carved up between member agencies. Each member agency sees a pre-determined percentage of the total and as a result is encouraged to think and act independently.

The DEC Secretariat relies on member agencies to request funds from the DEC, initially up to their Indicator of Capacity limit. Requests are made based on budgets. Budgets are drawn up from project plans, which should be based on strategic objectives. Specifically, budgets are prepared at the four and twelve week stages. Inaccuracies in individual members' budgets have caused significant inefficiency in overall resource allocation.

### **Finding three**

**Member agencies have allocated resources internally with different levels of efficiency.**

#### **3.3.1 Evidence**

1. Some member agencies had organisational strategy and structures in place that allowed them to develop appropriate plans quickly.

#### **Example 1: Help Age India**

Help Age India is an example of good practice, demonstrating efficient resource allocation. They undertook high impact government and NGO lobbying on the back of efficient direct service provision. Their field staff believe that their advocacy work will have a greater long-term impact than their service provision. For instance, it led to the position of a desk officer dedicated to the needs of older people in the Vulnerability Group in the Collector's Office in the local state government structure. Advocacy work is made credible by fieldwork. But it only represents a small proportion of the total costs of the programme.

The quality of their initial planning can be seen in the changes between the budgets prepared for the DEC at the one, three and six months stages after the earthquake. The table below shows a summary of the amounts budgeted for all their programme activities.

NB Each budget covers the same overall programme. The 'one month', 'three month' and 'six month' labels refer to when the budget was prepared or revised, not to the length of the implementation period.

**Table 1: Help Age India Key Programme Activities**

All figures in £'000.

<b>Programme activity</b>	<b>One month budget</b>	<b>Three month budget</b>	<b>Six month budget</b>
Mobile medical care	24	24	26
Distribution of relief items	470	392	392
Livelihood support	94	186	191
House rebuilding support	142	398	406

These figures show:

- The choice of programme activities did not change from the first month of intervention.
- Existing programme activities were scaled up as more funds became available. (£175k of these additional funds came from the DEC.)
- Less could be spent on relief items than initially planned, reflecting the limited role of DEC member agencies in meeting immediate humanitarian needs.
- More will be spent on house rebuilding support than initially planned, reflecting the needs expressed by beneficiaries. This has been a common experience for member agencies.

2. Other member agencies changed their plans more substantially between the budgets prepared after one, three and six months (and later). Project design was based on assumptions that were subsequently seen not to have held true. This has included changes of activities within overall programme goals which have not impacted on the overall budget, and some changes which have impacted on the overall budget.

**Example 2: Concern**

Concern saw significant change in their planned programme activities across the six month period. Their budgeted programme activities were:

**Table 2: Concern Key Programme Activities**

All figures in £'000.

Programme activity	One month budget	Three month budget	Six month budget
Temporary shelter	95	95	226
Distribution of relief items	251	251	267
Mid-term and permanent shelter	141	266	431
Schools rebuilding	141	141	-
Local community offices rebuilding	100	-	-
Livelihood support	80	80	6
Community/NGO training	25	50	26
Contingency	62	66	-

These figures show:

- Significant changes in the choice of activities to undertake, and in the scale of implementation for those activities.
- The focus of rehabilitation activities changed from a fairly equal spread of resources across four main activities (on the one month budget) to 93% being spent on one: mid-term and permanent shelter (on the six month budget). This was in response to the needs expressed by the Indian NGOs with which Concern is working.
- Expenditure on relief items went ahead very close to the initial budget.

**Example 3: Merlin**

Merlin originally budgeted for a medical response to an outbreak of disease, which did not materialise. As a result, planned expenditure on staff & staff support costs decreased from £129k on the one-month budget to £83k on the six-month budget. Other administrative and support costs were also substantially lower than originally budgeted. After their one-month budget, they increased the level of overall spend from £343k to £465k, and it has remained at that level. Planned expenditure on health facility infrastructure increased from £79k on the one-month budget to £177k on the six month budget, and is currently forecast to come in at £245k.

These figures show a flexible and reactive approach to planning similar to Concern.

**Example 4: Oxfam**

Oxfam had the most difficulty in this area. Their budgeted programme activities funded from DEC pooled funds were:

**Table 3: Oxfam Key Programme Activities**

All figures in £'000.

<b>Programme activity</b>	<b>One month budget</b>	<b>Three month budget</b>	<b>Six month budget</b>
Distribution of relief items	194	126	126
Livelihood support	1,463	1,738	358
Mid-term and permanent shelter	591	1,138	50
Water and sanitation	350	213	169
Community health promotion	-	149	62

These figures speak for themselves. They show:

- Huge variation between the scale of activities planned within the first three months, and at the six month mark.
- Some change in the choice of activities undertaken.

**3.3.2 Context**

- Some DEC member agencies have been unclear as to how the DEC operates. This has influenced their approach to project planning, with different agencies taking very different approaches to budgeting. (See also findings two and nine.)
- Some assumed that no movement of funds between different budget lines was acceptable without prior approval from the DEC secretariat (e.g. CARE). Others assumed that there was complete flexibility to re-allocate costs between different budget lines, so long as the total amount of the budget did not change (e.g. Merlin).
- Some agencies budgeted in a great deal of detail. Others included some very general budgets with huge individual lines. For instance, BRCS sent a budget to the DEC with their six-month finance report which is split into 20 lines, covering a total of £2,428k. It includes a single line item of £744k for “reconstruction of public health facilities”. In contrast, Merlin’s entire budget of 47 detailed lines comes to £465k.
- The total amount that the appeal would raise was not known for some time, and was seen by some member agencies as a moving target, which made planning difficult. Others found the cut-off estimates provided by the DEC (e.g. the £15m figure at the 4-week mark) helpful in developing plans.
- Different agencies have very different levels of experience of operating in India, of responding to humanitarian disasters in general and earthquakes in particular, and very different management structures. They also appear to have different abilities to

institutionalise organisational experience, and to act on previous lessons learned to develop appropriate strategy.

- The overall task of reconstruction and rehabilitation in Gujarat is vast beyond the dreams and capacities of NGOs, adding to significant development needs from before the earthquake. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank estimate that the cost of direct reconstruction alone is \$2.3bn. The cost in terms of economic disruption is estimated at a further \$2.2 bn.
- It is estimated that the government will be responsible for at least 90% of the reconstruction of shelter in Gujarat, and for an equally vast majority of community buildings (e.g. health centres and primary schools).

### **3.3.3 Impact**

Some member agencies have planned their activities efficiently, and implemented them within an overall strategy. This ensures a high level of impact in the short term, and a strong chance of on-going impact into the future.

Other member agencies have developed overall programme objectives as the response has evolved. This approach allowed them to meet needs as funding permitted, as they developed their capacity on the ground, and as they were perceived by field staff or expressed by beneficiaries. This is a pragmatic approach: it gets the money spent on short-term interventions (short-term, in this case, meaning anything up to two years). But the lack of a clearly defined overall strategy creates two serious risks. It provides no guarantee that medium or long-term impact will be attained or maximised. It also increases the risk that programmes are developed in response to organisational or donor imperatives, ahead of the needs of beneficiaries.

The direct costs of repeated planning exercises should not be under-estimated. Days of staff time and of partners' staff time are required to develop, refine and disseminate each plan.

Two key results stem from the inefficient allocation of resources within some member agencies. Firstly, less impact is achieved than might have been by the individual agency. Secondly, funds are tied up by inefficient agencies which could have been used more productively by other member agencies. The overall allocation of resources between member agencies becomes less efficient and the collective impact suffers.

### **3.3.4 Comment**

Meaningful programme planning is only possible within the framework of carefully considered strategy. Weaknesses at the level of programme planning are a reflection of weaknesses in strategic planning.

Generally organisations which had pre-defined, limited strategic aims (notably ActionAid and HelpAge India) had the most effective programme planning in the Gujarat earthquake response, and this led directly to their achieving the most impact. Others either found it difficult to develop appropriate strategy or difficult to make their structures work to deliver that strategy.

The Red Cross response benefited from having a very clear dividing line between relief activities and rehabilitation activities. Relief activities were managed by the Federation, dominated by an ex-pat presence that peaked at 150 delegates. They delivered Red Cross emergency relief assistance such as running a temporary field hospital. In the rehabilitation phase, the British Red Cross is taking more of a lead on a specific project. DEC funding has been used in both phases.

Other DEC member agencies found the transition from relief to rehabilitation harder to manage. This has had a serious impact, as member agencies will spend well over 80% of DEC funds on rehabilitation activities. A relief-based operating strategy is inappropriate for long-term rehabilitation work – fundamentally different principles apply. Concern, Merlin, Oxfam and Save the Children all found this particularly difficult, with field staff (who were often relief-oriented) developing programme activities in the absence of clearly defined high-level operating strategy.

All agencies need to take a pragmatic view about matching donors' funds to beneficiaries' needs. However, some agencies appear to have been donor driven, not needs driven. It seems very unlikely that Merlin would have responded to the Gujarat earthquake if DEC funding had not been available. Save the Children's staff described a process of "dynamic planning" in the field, within parameters set by the overall amount of funds provided by different donors for broadly defined activities.

One of the key influences informing field-level strategic planning has been the issue of staffing. By and large, those organisations which employed and relied on Indian managers achieved much more appropriate strategic focus in their activities. This point also relates directly to questions of cost and efficiency, discussed in finding four below.

#### **Finding four:**

**Member agencies have operated with different levels of cost-efficiency.**

##### **3.4.1 Evidence**

1. Some agencies chose to import emergency relief items on high profile flights. Others were able to purchase similar goods (including buckets, clothes and tents) locally, or from neighbouring countries.
2. The purchase price of tents used during the initial relief phase varied from less than 2,000 rupees for a simple 18' x 20' tent purchased in Delhi to over 6,000 rupees (137 USD) for a more complicated 12' x 12' tent. Tents bought from outside India or Pakistan were the most expensive. This approach incurred significant additional costs, including transport (airfreight) and the time of international staff.
3. Some agencies deployed Indian managers who arrived in Bhuj within days of the earthquake, and made a personal commitment to stay for two years or more. Notably, World Vision's senior field managers have made this commitment. The same senior staff carried out the assessments, wrote the proposals, and now manage the programme. This is highly cost-efficient. Local NGO partners by and large have had very low levels of staff turnover.

4. Other member agencies have had a high level of staff turnover (for a variety of reasons). Concern, Merlin and Oxfam have all employed three different expat programme coordinators on the earthquake response so far. These three agencies and Save the Children have all seen large number of expatriate logisticians, advisors and managers staffing their field offices for short periods of time (the majority staying for six months or less).
5. In October 2001, some agencies paid drivers 4,000 rupees a month or less. Others paid drivers 12,000 rupees a month. In October, the market rate in Bhuj is approximately 4,000 rupees. It is likely to have been higher in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. It is unlikely ever to have reached 12,000 rupees a month.
6. Beneficiaries of VHAI, a local partner of Christian Aid, pointed out that VHAI was paying a premium on locally-purchased rehabilitation materials. VHAI then delegated negotiating authority to community representatives, and the cost of a wooden kiosk for a local trader fell from 7,000 Rps to 4,500 Rps.
7. Agencies have incurred very different levels of direct building costs. For example, CARE (using contractors) has built permanent houses at a cost of 300 – 320 rupees per square foot. Abhiyan (a local NGO network working with Save the Children) has built permanent houses at a cost of approximately 130 rupees per square foot, through substantial community participation. Merlin's health centres work out at a cost of approximately 610 – 645 rupees per square foot. These costs do not include organisational overheads, design, supervision or any on-going service costs for the houses. In Merlin's case, one-off buildings have been constructed far away from their field office. This is always expensive for both the contractor and the client.

### 3.4.2 Context

- Local markets were put under great strain by the earthquake and subsequent influx of relief money. Availability and prices fluctuated enormously but goods were basically available.
- Staff turnover is a major cost driver in NGO work. It creates direct costs (recruitment, induction, travel) and indirect costs (team disruption, loss of learning and focus, changes of direction, the need to rebuild external relationships).
- Expat staff are a very great deal more expensive than Indian staff. Salaries of managers are four to eight times higher, and support costs are also high (including international airfares, rest and recuperation, and UK based recruitment costs). Many Indian managers demonstrated project management skills that were as good as or better than those of expatriates.
- Many expat staff have the benefit of familiarity with individual organisations (though not all expat staff employed had previous experience of their agency), and a shared view of the world and the role of international NGOs with headquarters-based staff.
- However, expats who are not familiar with India have to learn much about the local context, and are more likely to take inappropriate decisions. Indian managers are more likely to understand the local context. Many Indian staff employed by or working in partnership with DEC member agencies appeared to have a very deep commitment to the people they worked to help, based on a different concept of charity than that which motivates many itinerant expatriate aid workers.
- Some member agencies found it difficult to attract well-qualified Indian staff, particularly as they were only able to offer short-term employment contracts.

### 3.4.3 Impact

Some agencies have achieved more impact at lower cost than others. In general, those that worked through Indian-managed structures have achieved more. Those that worked with an expat-managed response, informed by an ‘emergency relief’ operating approach, achieved less. The greater the level of expat involvement, the lower has been the cost-efficiency.

The influx of funds has an immediate impact on the local market, sending the price of local goods and services such as vegetables and accommodation rental soaring. When international agencies pay inflated prices for goods and services they not only push the price of goods out of the reach of the poorest, but they also undermine the respect that people have for the agencies themselves, and the sense of human solidarity that they seek to nurture.

### 3.4.4 Comment

Different organisations always work with different levels of cost-efficiency. Ways of working are subtly different, and many important benefits are delivered which do not have a direct cost implication. Cost-efficiency is a crude measure, which is rightly viewed with some scepticism in the NGO sector.

However, the level of difference described above is striking. All NGOs have a serious obligation to use funds in the most cost-efficient way possible, within constraints of time, quality and ethics.

Some DEC member agencies have achieved impressive levels of cost-efficiency. Often this has been achieved by Indian partner NGOs. Others that work through Indian-managed structures with effective community participation, such as ActionAid, have also achieved a great deal per pound spent. They have generally negotiated the cheapest prices for goods and services provided locally.

Organisations such as CARE and World Vision are delivering very large rehabilitation programmes from their operating base. The scale of programmes supported from fixed administrative costs improves their cost-efficiency. However, these organisations paid much higher prices for tents than many others, having a greater tendency to import goods.

Other organisations have had lower levels of cost-efficiency – most notably those with the staffing issues outlined above, operating in ‘emergency relief’ mode. These staffing issues are a direct result of inappropriate strategic focus or delivery, at a senior level.

Oxfam appears to have been the most extreme example in which the People in Aid code was contravened, with extremely difficult living and working conditions for Gujarat based field staff for the first three months of the response. Flooded camps and inadequate facilities also have a very direct impact on the efficiency of expensive expat staff.

There was significant debate within agencies about whether it was appropriate to fly expensively bought relief goods in to India on expensively chartered relief planes. In some organisations, notably Concern, field staff argued against this course of action, but were over-ruled by more senior managers. Relief flights create profile for organisations in what is perceived to be a competitive fund-raising environment. There is always speculation that they may be used as a way of 'being seen to do something' rather than as the most effective way of meeting the needs of beneficiaries.

Agencies have claimed very different levels of UK management support costs. The highest was Tearfund, with total UK support costs of £90k. This is by no means necessarily excessive for a £2m programme (Tearfund used DEC funds to contribute to a larger programme). The lowest was Oxfam which claimed only £16k in UK support costs. This appears to be significantly lower than the actual UK support costs incurred. Others varied within the £30k - £60k range. In some cases it is perfectly possible that support costs claimed from the DEC are greater than actual costs incurred.

It is notoriously difficult to compare support costs between organisations and programmes. Different agencies operate in different ways, and classify different costs as 'support'. A simple percentage of 'support' compared to 'programme' costs is at best meaningless and at worst downright misleading. It would be useful for the DEC to provide central guidance on the UK management and support costs that they expect to fund.

**Finding five:**

**Financial administration and control has been of a robust professional standard in both member agencies and NGO partners.**

**3.5.1 Evidence**

1. Qualified accounting staff have been employed in the vast majority of field offices. (This includes DEC member agencies' offices, and the offices of their local partners.)
2. Basic accounting records, including receipts, vouchers and supporting documents, have been filed in good order and entered into cashbooks.
3. Practical day to day procedures have been implemented, covering basic financial administration and controls such as: authorising payments, paying salaries, handling staff floats and accounting for fixed assets.
4. In almost all cases, DEC member agencies have developed or followed written financial procedures. Many member agencies had financial procedures for field offices already prepared, which were then brought into force in new or expanded field offices.
5. All DEC member agencies that were registered in India used bank accounts in the organisation's name. Funds were transferred from bank to bank. However, at times funds passed through three or four bank accounts on the way from the DEC to an organisation's field office.
6. Several DEC member agencies (including BRCS, Concern and Merlin) have found it difficult or impossible to open a bank account. NGOs cannot open an organisational account

until they are registered with the Indian government. Even then, opening the account can be a bureaucratic and time-consuming business. These agencies have aimed to make as many payments as possible direct from their head offices (including grants to partners and contractors' fees). This has limited the amount of money passing through their field office either as cash or in personal bank accounts. However, it raises some legal queries around India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act rules.

7. Where large sums of cash have been held in field offices, reasonably tight controls have been implemented. As ever, DEC member agencies have relied heavily on individual field managers. No cash losses were reported. This was recognised as a short term solution, and the DEC member agencies involved were taking active steps to resolve the situation.
8. DEC member agencies had a clear, up to date understanding of what money they had received from which source, and what it could be used for. In most cases, this information was held in a 'funding grid', which reconciled income from individual grants to the overall budget. World Vision uses a particularly powerful Lotus Notes system to keep different parts of the global organisation informed about grants received for any programme.
9. Expenditure was coded to specific budget lines and donors. In most cases, this was done by the project managers (rather than the finance staff). This is good practice, greatly improving the accuracy of coding, as it is done by people who have a really close understanding of the project and donors.
10. A wide range of computer systems has been used. World Vision use the large, organisation-wide package Sun in their field office. Others use Excel spreadsheets, which are then fed into organisational software. However, all systems were able to provide appropriate analysis, showing income and costs split by budget line and by donor.
11. Almost all DEC member agencies prepared monthly budget monitoring reports, containing information that was sufficiently accurate and timely to be useful to project managers. Most member agencies prepared these reports in the field. However, Merlin successfully sent cashbook information to a Regional Finance Officer based in Moscow, who passed financial information on to head office, and management information back to the field. Concern had more difficulty in preparing management information at long range, with only irregular information available in the field. This appears to have been due to a lack of time on the part of supporting finance staff in Ireland.
12. There was some variation in the number of finance staff supporting operations in head offices and in the field. In the field, World Vision employed four finance staff for their rehabilitation programme (spending £8m over two years: an average annual spend of £4m). Save the Children employed two finance staff for their programme (spending £5m over eighteen months: an average annual spend of £3.3m).
13. In the UK, the BRCS spends £60m overseas a year, through 8 desks. Each desk has its own support staff, including at least 50% of one person's time on financial issues. In addition, there is an International Finance Team of three accountants, which exists only to provide management support to the desks (not to process transactions or field returns). The desk covering India monitors seven countries, with the BRCS working in only four of these. It is very rare that the BRCS is involved in managing operations directly. Financial management is seen as a core desk function, receiving strong management emphasis and support. The financial situation of field projects is monitored in detail by the UK office.
14. In contrast, Oxfam's humanitarian department spent approximately £45m overseas in 2000, through 5 area teams. The Asia team provides advice and funding to a stretch of the world

from Afghanistan to the Philippines, including approximately ten countries, including four in which major disasters have occurred in the last year, one of which was the Gujarat earthquake. All projects they support involve some degree (normally a high degree) of direct intervention by Oxfam, directly managed through a regional structure. Area teams have their own support staff, including administrators who spend some of their time on financial issues. However, no dedicated finance team provides support to the area teams. One accountant from outside the humanitarian department provides financial support to the Asia team, for approximately 20% of his time. He has other main responsibilities. The financial situation of field projects is not monitored in detail by the UK office.

15. DEC member agencies made wide-ranging use of internal and external audit. For example, Concern's field office underwent a detailed internal audit in September 2001. Other agencies sent finance staff to audit and support field teams. In some member agencies, these visits included an informal internal audit.

### **3.5.2 Context**

- All NGOs based in India which receive funds from outside the country have to be registered with the government, and have to undergo an annual external audit. This applies to Indian NGOs and to the local offices of international NGOs. Audits regularly check every voucher entered in an NGO's books, and are taken very seriously. There are very many Indian audit firms working to a high degree of professional practice in Gujarat.
- There appears to be a high level of expected professional practice in the community of Indian NGOs, employing qualified accountants, maintaining original receipts and vouchers in good order and implementing strong basic financial controls.
- Some DEC member agencies commented that it was difficult to recruit Indian accounting staff in Gujarat.

### **3.5.3 Impact**

Funds have been carefully controlled in the field. The risks of misuse and misappropriation of funds have been minimised effectively. Just as importantly, appropriate support has been provided to programme staff. Financial reports have been prepared with a high degree of accuracy, supported by well maintained financial records.

### **3.5.4 Comment**

The quality of financial administration and control is impressive, given the pressure to act quickly, the distance from head office and the bureaucratic weight of some DEC member agencies. In these circumstances, it is not easy to strike a balance between effective control and support for field programmes.

The most important first step in achieving this is to employ appropriately qualified financial staff: trained accountants. DEC member agencies have included good finance staff in field teams right from the beginning of their operations. When necessary, organisations setting up new offices for this response made appropriate use of expat accountants.

The organisations which employed fewer financial staff (either in their head office, or in India) found it more difficult to provide support to decision makers. NGOs rightly strive to keep their administration and management costs to a minimum. However, they have an equal responsibility to provide managers with the support they need to implement effective programmes.

Procedures manuals varied greatly. Some were relatively informal, around ten pages long. Others were hundreds of pages long. Some appeared to be more focused on the needs of head office, rather than the needs of the field office.

Different DEC member agencies had very different internal audit capacities. Some were able to audit all their partners, as well as their field offices (see finding six). Others did not have nearly such wide-ranging audit programmes. It did not appear that any of the audits that had been carried out by DEC member agencies were excessive.

**Finding six:**

**NGO partners have maintained professional levels of financial administration, control and accountability.**

**3.6.1 Evidence**

1. Collaboration between DEC member agencies and local partner NGOs has been formalised using signed agreements. Agreements have specified the roles and responsibilities of each party, and have also included budgets. They have been signed on legally binding forms. Responsibilities often included detailed reporting and control requirements. The majority of agreements were signed before project implementation began.
2. Field staff from DEC member agencies have engaged with the financial aspects of their roles. They have seen the project budget as a key management tool for partnership, not an ancillary distraction.
3. Partners appear to have maintained high levels of basic financial administration and control. In particular, vouchers have been well maintained, and accurate financial reports prepared for funding DEC member agencies.
4. Some DEC member agencies assessed their partners' financial management capacity before entering into partnership. In addition, capacity building support was provided. ActionAid's internal audit team has visited each of their partners twice since July 2001: once to check systems and make specific recommendations for improvement, and a second time to check vouchers. ActionAid's partnership agreement stipulated that partners had to undergo an ActionAid internal. Concern was also notable in having a structured financial management assessment procedure for partners, supported by subsequent internal audit visits.
5. Many partners underwent an external audit at the end of each distinct project. This allowed project reports to be verified by the external auditor before they were submitted to donors. This appeared to be recognised as established good practice, despite the intrusion and disruption of frequent audits.
6. Inevitably, given the number of partners and volume of funds, some irregularities occurred. Some have been detected and acted on. It is likely that the detection is a greater indicator of systematic good practice than the irregularity is an indicator of systematic bad practice. For

instance, Oxfam detected irregularities in a partner's accounts which were kept in Gujarati. No further grants were made to this partner. Concern has identified control weaknesses around the same issue with one of their partners, and is currently resolving them by employing a Gujarati-speaking (and reading) local accountant.

7. In a minority of cases the influx of funds may have led to a breakdown in the control environment within local partners, which made it difficult to meet administrative and reporting requirements. Save the Children had difficulties in this area with one of their major partners, which led to a cooling of the relationship in mid-implementation. The original partnership budget (for a total of £1.1m) was based on heavily inflated prices (a unit cost of 3,900 rupees for semi-permanent shelters, which subsequently came down by 33% to 2,625 rupees). This is likely to have contributed to the diminution of control, and may have been a direct result of negotiation in a high pressure environment, with imperfect information and limited understanding of the local context.

### 3.6.2 Context

- DEC member agencies have made wide-ranging use of local partners. All but one of the member agencies have undertaken the majority of their direct service provision through partner NGOs or local contractors. This is broadly recognised as the most effective approach to rehabilitation, in both the short and the long term.
- 'Local partners' is a simplifying term, covering a range of organisations. Different DEC member agencies formed partnerships with: local community groups (normally small), networks of community groups, and regional or national Indian charities (also known as trusts, they can be very large). Some member agencies had existing partners (maintained through their own strong local presence). Others were starting from scratch.
- Many local partners have been highly dedicated to delivering effective relief and rehabilitation. Some national Indian organisations have very robust infrastructures, and have been able to respond highly effectively and appropriately. This has included effective financial management both at the nuts and bolts level of financial administration and control, and at the strategic level. It is likely that they have performed more efficiently and effectively than some DEC member agencies.
- It is not clear to what extent member agencies were chasing partners. Certainly, those agencies which formed partnerships with effective local organisations achieved a great deal of impact. The number of high quality partner organisations must be limited.
- Some partner organisations grew enormously, due to the influx of funds in response to the earthquake. An extreme example is the estimate that Abhiyan, the widely respected network of NGOs in Gujarat, grew from having an annual turnover of 50m rupees (£0.75m) to over 800m rupees (£12m) over the course of this year.
- Partner organisations received funds from many different sources. In some instances, two or more DEC member agencies funded the same partner organisation.

### 3.6.3 Impact

The use of written, signed agreements (including budgets) ensures that DEC member agencies and their partners have a clear understanding of what they had both agreed to. This shared understanding has been crucial for successful project implementation.

The generally high level of financial administration, control and accountability among partners allows DEC member agencies confidence that funds have been used as agreed.

Overall, the financial management aspects of partnership appear to have run smoothly, supporting programme implementation effectively. Working through partners has been generally recognised as the most effective way of identifying and meeting local community needs, and of long term capacity building for Gujarati NGOs.

### **3.6.4 Comment**

DEC member agencies relied heavily on partner organisations in the earthquake response. This created both opportunities and threats for the community of Indian NGOs working in Gujarat. The main opportunity was firmly grasped, and a great deal of high quality work was carried out in the short term.

Good financial practice was indicated by the willingness of partners to accept audits, and by the extent to which project staff were engaged with the financial aspects of working with partners. In the majority of cases, these pointed to a positive and open relationship.

There were also difficulties. The immediate environment did not create conditions encouraging financial discipline. There was a lot of money available, and great pressure to act quickly. There are anecdotal reports of partner organisations dropping funding offered from one source and taking it from another which imposed less onerous operating conditions.

This effect limits the excesses of over-blown reporting requirements. However, no evidence was found that DEC member agencies were setting unreasonably tight operating conditions. No converse correcting mechanism existed, tightening operating conditions when necessary.

DEC member agencies operating independently have found this issue difficult to resolve. Although they may take what they see to be a responsible approach to partnership, other funding entities take very different approaches. Common standards between agencies are very hard to develop in practice, particularly when they work with such varied conceptions of what 'partnership' means.

DEC mechanisms seem to be based on the assumption that programmes are implemented by operational, UK based NGOs. For instance, the budget format is based on DfID's format for emergency humanitarian intervention. With its categories for 'supplies and materials', it is not appropriate for rehabilitation activity implemented by partners. This increased the administrative burden in implementing partners and funding member agencies.

More substantially, large partners were not involved in the DEC's initial appeal-launching conference call, or in field level co-ordination meetings. This appears to have been a missed opportunity, given the results of the wide ranging difficulty of DEC member agencies to get to grips with the local context.

**Finding seven:**

**NGOs have been accountable to the DEC for the funds they have received. Some have also given financial account to beneficiaries.**

**3.7.1 Evidence**

1. DEC member agencies use a variety of systems to track income from donor to expenditure. In all cases, DEC funds have been clearly marked using a 'DEC' or 'Gujarat programme' code when they have been received. This has allowed DEC member agencies to monitor the amount of DEC funding that they have received for use on the Gujarat earthquake response. (This is generally part of a wider system, monitoring the receipt and use of restricted funds within member agencies.)
2. DEC member agencies have provided financial reports to the DEC secretariat as requested. Reports have been accurate (albeit sometimes a few weeks late) and supported by robust financial records (see finding five).
3. Expenditure is generally allocated to specific donors in the field (see finding five). In most cases, this was done by the cost-incurring project staff, rather than finance staff. This is good practice. It ensures an accurate match between the purposes for which funds were donated, and what they were spent on. In the case of the DEC, funds were provided for unrestricted activities within the earthquake response. So, the detailed mechanism of allocating specific field costs to funders has had no impact on accountability.
4. Reports of expenditure have been reconciled to statements of income (from all different income sources), more usually in head office than in the field. In addition, financial reports for donors have been reconciled to internal financial reports for managers.
5. Some DEC member agencies provided financial and narrative reports which described their total programme, which included the use of significant funds from other sources. These did not always specify exactly how DEC funds had been used within the overall programme.
6. Some DEC member agencies (and their partners) have worked with a high level of community participation. This has involved beneficiaries in resource allocation, allowing them to discuss different options, which creates direct accountability. For instance, VHAI discussed the design of a community centre with the beneficiary community. This allowed beneficiaries to influence how scarce resources would be used. By providing information about costs, beneficiaries knew what decisions were being made on their behalf.
7. ActionAid have also been active in developing ways of giving financial account to beneficiaries. They have encouraged their partners to display financial statements in community centres. They have also published financial statements in the local press. The ActionAid team described that a necessary precursor to expecting partners to do this was for the ActionAid office in Ghandidham to share its financial statements with partners.

**3.7.2 Context**

- All DEC member agencies are required by UK charity law to monitor and report on restricted funds separately. This guarantees a measure of accountability to donors, which should allow them to see how their funds have been used.
- Almost all donors insist that grant receiving organisations submit some type of financial and narrative report, explaining how funds have been used.

- Principle nine of the Red Cross Code of Conduct states that “We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources”.
- DEC member agencies and their partners received funding from many different sources.

### **3.7.3 Impact**

DEC member agencies can track DEC donations through to expenditure. They provide accurate and timely financial statements to the DEC secretariat.

Very few DEC member agencies have made any meaningful attempt to hold themselves financially accountable to those they seek to assist. This contravenes Principle Nine of the Red Cross Code of Conduct.

### **3.7.4 Comment**

DEC member agencies take their responsibility to account to donors for the use of funds very seriously. Significant staff time is invested in this, and a high level of accountability to donors is achieved. Internal managers are the only other stakeholder group to whom account is regularly given for the use of available funds.

The use of general reports for programmes which have received more than just DEC funding provides a limited level of accountability to the DEC. For instance, if £10k is contributed to a £100k temporary shelter project, then an overall report may not specify what the £10k has been used for. It could have been used to buy half of all tents bought, or wholly for administrative costs. But, this approach significantly reduces the administrative burden for implementing agencies. It would be useful for the DEC to consider whether this level of accountability is acceptable.

ActionAid appears to lead the way in developing and using organisation-wide tools for large international NGOs to give account to beneficiaries. Community focused tools have been used in Gujarat, which empower beneficiaries to understand and potentially influence how ActionAid behaves. No other agency used any mechanism similar to this.

Grass-roots level community participation (when achieved) has also created immediate financial accountability to beneficiaries. However, NGOs continue to act in the name of beneficiaries while programme-wide accountability to beneficiaries remains rare.

**Finding eight:**

**Members and NGO partners have involved programme managers in financial management. (It has not been 'left to the accountant'.)**

**3.8.1 Evidence**

1. Interviews with finance and programme staff suggested that by and large, programme staff have taken an active interest in financial issues.
2. There have been regular meetings between finance and programme staff. Some member agencies had weekly scheduled meetings, others fortnightly or monthly. However, in almost all cases finance staff in the field were available to provide immediate analysis and support for managers. Finance staff were normally members of the senior field-level management team.
3. Some member agencies have taken a forward looking and management-focused approach to financial support, rather than a cost counting and control approach. For instance, some agencies developed detailed cashflow and cost-to-completion models, forecasting how much they would have to spend to complete the project. Regularly updated (once a month) this is a powerful tool, supporting field managers. At times these were ad hoc. But they helped managers to plan ahead, and demonstrated a level of engagement between finance and programme staff.

**3.8.2 Context**

- Robust financial information has been produced, which programme staff have been able to rely on. This is a necessary condition for programme staff's engagement.
- By and large programme staff have some financial skills/training. The majority of DEC member agencies described recruitment procedures for field managers that included a financial test. However, staff in several member agencies expressed a wish for more financial training.
- Different member agencies provided different levels of financial management support to key decision makers in the field and in the UK. (See finding five.)

**3.8.3 Impact and comment**

Financial management across the programme has been greatly strengthened by the involvement of programme staff. They have known how much they have available, and what it can be spent on. Without engagement at this level, resources cannot be matched to activities and control often suffers.

As in any sector, it is not always easy to involve programme staff in financial management. The extent to which DEC member agencies were able to achieve this demonstrates how widely it is accepted and implemented as good practice.

However, finance staff do not appear to have been much involved in programme decisions. If they had been, then greater emphasis might have been put on cost-effectiveness in strategising (see finding three).

**Finding nine:**

**Field and head office staff of member agencies have not always understood the DEC's role and operating procedures.**

**3.9.1 Evidence**

1. There was significant confusion among DEC member agencies about DEC procedures, including why information was requested, what format it should be sent in, and whether funds were available in advance or in arrears.
2. Some agencies perceived that the DEC had to approve project plans, budgets and budget revisions. Others assumed that the DEC had no influence on budget changes.
3. A large proportion of DEC member agencies expressed a wish for clearer formats for project plans and reports.
4. The extension of the time period, and use of the fund closing mechanism created some confusion among member agencies, particularly as these mechanisms remained uncertain until almost six months after the earthquake.
5. The Indicator of Capacity mechanism was not used to split the additional £1.5m of pooled funds received between April and July 2001.

**3.9.2 Context**

- Some organisations have a long chain stretching from the DEC Central Contact to the field. For instance, Help the Aged is the member of the DEC, which passes funds and information to Help Age International (based in the UK), which passes them on to Help Age India (in Delhi), which pass them on to the field office. This involves three separate entities and two continents. In addition, some member agencies have their own internal communications issues. It is not surprising that the clarity of message can suffer.
- The DEC is unique among fund disbursing bodies. But hands-on staff in the UK and in the field generally see it in the same light as other institutional donors.
- A small proportion of partners had worked with DEC funding before (in Orissa). But most did not understand how the DEC raises funds and differs from institutional donors. Occasionally, this was perceived as undermining a sense of partnership, as it was not obvious what the DEC's goals were.
- Many UK staff from DEC member agencies mentioned that they valued the accessibility of the DEC.
- Funds are received by the DEC through many different routes, including through banks, post offices, member agencies and directly. The DEC and member agencies both receive a mixture of pooled funds and retained funds. These funds have to be re-distributed between collecting organisations. This is complicated, and makes it difficult to track total pooled income.

### **3.9.3 Impact**

Procedural niggles added to the much more serious frustration caused by the nine month time limit.

Different member agencies have different operating arrangements with the DEC, receiving funding at different points in relation to projects, and negotiating time extensions.

In Gujarat, 'DEC agency' has become a tag for the group of member agencies, separate from any real acknowledgement of what the DEC is. 'DEC co-ordination meetings' cover a wider range of issues than those related to DEC funding. These meetings are set to continue beyond the nine month period, when the use of the name may create additional confusion as to the role of the DEC.

### **3.9.4 Comment**

This is a relatively minor point. Many staff in member agencies appreciate the informality and accessibility of the DEC secretariat – “just being able to pick up the phone” to talk to secretariat staff. However, the confusion among field staff (and some UK staff) appears to be avoidable.

One result of this informality is that personal relationships between staff and the secretariat can appear to have a big influence on the organisational relationship between a member agency and the secretariat. This is likely to have contributed to different agencies having different perceptions of DEC mechanisms.

It is not clear whether this confusion is due to unclear communications from the DEC to member agencies, or unclear communications within member agencies. It would be useful for the DEC to clarify the responsibilities of Central Contacts, alongside the on-going work on operating procedures.

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## **DEC Evaluation: The earthquake in Gujarat**

### **VOLUME THREE**

#### ***Sector Reports***

#### **Report Four**

### **Review against Sphere Standards**

Hugh Goyder, *Humanitarian Initiatives*

#### **Introduction**

The first part of this section of the evaluation reviews the extent to which DEC members and their local partners were aware of and felt able to adhere to Sphere Standards in the implementation of their programmes. The second part reviews the overall appropriateness of the Sphere Standards in Gujarat case and their use for the evaluation of emergency responses. The intention is both to inform future evaluations and contribute to planned revisions of the existing Sphere handbook.

The methodology used incorporated the following components. First agencies were requested to undertake their own self-evaluation against both Sphere and the Red Cross Code. Four agencies submitted a written assessment and DEC members also undertook a collective self-evaluation at a meeting in September 2001, on which this report draws extensively. These self-assessments were supplemented by further discussions in the field both individually and collectively with DEC agencies, including a meeting with Sphere consultants and “pilot” Sphere agencies hosted by DMI in Ahmedabad. . The purpose of this section is to provide an overall picture of the extent to which Sphere Standards have been adhered to and the constraints faced by DEC members in trying to adhere to them. Sphere Standards relating to nutrition and food aid were not relevant to this emergency, and this section therefore focuses on Sphere Standards in relation to water supply, sanitation, and shelter.

#### **Section One: Adherence to Sphere Standards**

##### **1.1 Generic issues in relation to Sphere Standards**

Discussions on the first draft of this section with DEC members and Sphere project staff showed up some of the difficulties of securing a common interpretation of Sphere across a large number of diverse agencies. The most common misunderstanding is between overall Sphere Standards and the more precise *indicators*. A second area of potential misunderstanding is a tendency to see Sphere as a “project” separate from other related international initiatives, specifically the Humanitarian Charter, even though both the Sphere Handbook and the training undertaken by the Sphere Project emphasize these linkages.

The intention of this section is simply to record and report the perceptions of Sphere held by DEC agencies working in Gujarat: where these perceptions differ from the intentions of the Sphere Project Team they may suggest issues which need to be covered in future Sphere training programmes and other dissemination activities: the important distinction between Sphere Standards and *indicators* seems to be one important area where more clarification is needed.

## 1.2 Assessment.

In every sector Sphere Standards emphasise the importance of the initial assessment. In evaluating actual performance against Sphere one should ideally have access to agencies' initial assessments in order to understand the initial assumptions made, and the actions implemented in order to better "track" how these interventions then worked out. However previous DEC evaluations have raised questions about the quality of agencies' assessments, and the Sphere Project's own implementation team has identified assessments as a problematic area<sup>2</sup>

We found it very difficult to track down original assessment documentation, despite repeated requests, so it is difficult to know the extent to which DEC members' assessments were consistent with Sphere Guidelines. Given the amounts of money being called forward by DEC members this relative dearth of assessment reports is an issue of some concern. For instance, when reporting on their assessment SCF said in their self evaluation that "*findings and recommendations were, however, not compiled in one single written report but fed into the planning process orally and through trip reports largely due to time constraint*". Internal documentation shared by some DEC members in the UK suggests that some agencies also had to make initial funding decisions on the basis of very little information.

There is clearly a trade-off between spending time making highly detailed assessments, and making a quick response. Even so our own findings support the view that "*In many funding proposals prepared by humanitarian agencies levels of information about the context in which assistance is to be delivered can be low. In effect these proposals represent an agency "offer" rather than a real analysis of the problem at hand – the local needs, the constraints on humanitarian action, and the local capacities available*"<sup>3</sup>.

In general the initial documentation that agencies submit to the DEC describes the immediate effects of the earthquake, and then moves to stating what the agency concerned plans to do in response. What is often omitted is a realistic assessment of the agency's own capacity and especially the limitations to this capacity. In the case of the Gujarat Earthquake it would have been especially useful if DEC members had outlined in their initial assessments what had **not** been damaged by the Earthquake and which therefore presented good opportunities for rapid relief and recovery – especially the very limited damage to local transport links, and local agriculture, a strong government system at all levels, and a huge diversity of local NGOs and other civil society organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> See J. Neves & M. Brown *Lessons learned through the process of piloting of the Humanitarian Charter & Minimum Standards* (Oct 2000). Available on [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

<sup>3</sup> Grunewald, Piroette and de Geoffroy in *Humanitarian Exchange: Issue 19*, September 2001.

Once news of a sudden impact disaster like an earthquake or a cyclone reaches both DEC members and DFID's Emergency Response Team a well-oiled response mechanism swings into action. While the Sphere Minimum Standards (p.9) state that '*our fundamental accountability must be to those we seek to assist*' it is clear that at this stage agencies' actions are not only driven by the presumed needs on the ground but also by organizational, public relations, and financial imperatives. DEC members would argue in return that they have to be seen to be responding to any major and well-reported emergency, and that a prompt response is more in the interest of beneficiaries than a delayed response. However the imperatives mentioned above tend to lead those agencies which sent in staff from the UK to underestimate the likely response to the earthquake both of the State government, local NGOs, and civil society more generally, and the ability of the local market to meet initial supplies needs. In the early reports from agencies from the Earthquake area there is a presumption in favour of intervention, followed by a request for funds, supplies, and equipment.

Once their teams were in place most DEC agencies conducted detailed assessments using participatory methods, and these assessments covered both issues of village selection, and the major priorities within each village in relation to issues like drinking water, animal husbandry, opportunities for labour, and the availability of food. Participatory Appraisal (PRA) techniques were widely used. The problem reported by many agencies was that after going through such a relatively laborious assessment process other NGOs or Government agencies could arrive in the same villages and start relief or rehabilitation activities on the basis of a far more sketchy assessment.

### **1.3 Training and DEC members' awareness of Sphere Standards**

Even where Sphere Standards were clearly relevant, they lacked a clear "champion". Firstly senior staff felt under strong time pressures, as discussed below and in other sections of this evaluation. Secondly any training in Sphere standards seems to have been something of an afterthought. As the Oxfam self-evaluation notes: "*an introduction to the Sphere standards and the ICRC Codes should be given at the beginning of a program.*" Such training was especially important as so much implementation work was carried out by local NGOs and in some cases (eg ActionAid) by volunteers. Many DEC members tried to organize training for their local NGO partners, but in general with so many NGOs involved it was very difficult for them to insist that Sphere Standards should be adhered to. Local NGOs were often dealing with more than one INGO, and in spite of the best efforts of DEC agencies, there are still no agreed standards that are actually followed by all international agencies, let alone local NGOs, especially when there is an overall surplus of funding. The training in Sphere Standards being offered now both by DMI and some DEC members individually in Gujarat will mainly help inform the response to future emergencies.

The internal evaluations shared with the DEC evaluation team show the challenge of making staff aware of Sphere Standards (and indicators) at every stage of a relief operation, especially when staff turnover is high and there is great pressure to get new staff mobilised quickly. The Oxfam evaluation notes that while some staff members used Sphere in their assessments, in general '*use of Sphere standards seems to have been sporadic, with the principal variable being the prior knowledge and interest of individual staff members*'.

## 1.4 Human Resources

In all sectors a key Sphere Standard is that *“interventions are implemented by staff who have appropriate qualifications and experience for the duties involved, and who are adequately managed and supported”*. This issue was hardly referred to at all in the self-evaluations by DEC members or at their own meeting to discuss Sphere Standards, perhaps because it is relatively sensitive. The People in Aid Code goes into far greater detail than does Sphere in respect to how staff managing emergencies should be managed and supported, and a number of issues related to human resources management are covered elsewhere in this evaluation. Three issues must be highlighted here. First DEC agencies varied widely in the kind of previous experience their senior staff brought to the Earthquake response. Many agencies employed a mix of expatriate staff familiar with emergencies elsewhere and local staff with a strong understanding of the local context and development work, but perhaps less experience of emergencies. Whether this combination worked depended on the both the management ability and length of service of the Programme Coordinator concerned, but in general the higher the turnover of staff at senior levels, the harder it was for DEC agencies to observe either Sphere Standards or the People in Aid Code.

Secondly there were major problems in the amount of management support offered to field staff not just in those DEC members new to India (Concern and Merlin) but also in Oxfam, which based their Programme Coordinator in Ahmedabad, over 6 hours' drive from Bhuj.

Thirdly there was a wide variation in the quality of logistical support and accommodation offered by DEC agencies. While most agencies offered adequate accommodation for their teams, Oxfam's compound at Lakadia, (described in detail in their own evaluation) was totally inadequate and clearly in breach both of Sphere Standards and the People in Aid Code.

## 1.5. Response Sectors

**1.5.1. Water supply.** Sphere Standards call for relatively demanding assessments in relation to water & sanitation, including an *“assessment...conducted in co-operation with a multi-sectoral team, local authorities, women and men from the affected population and humanitarian agencies”*... (Sphere p.21). The geographical context in which such an assessment is to be made is not specified: it might be possible to set up such an assessment in one town or a small number of villages, but it would have taken many weeks for such a detailed exercise to be completed for the whole area affected by the earthquake. More practically one would have hoped that DEC agencies might have documented whether or not the earthquake resulted in a major disruption of water supplies and hence whether there was an immediate threat to health and livelihoods. If so where were these problems most acute and how well placed were government authorities and municipalities to meet these needs?

While Oxfam's initial water programme was useful, their initial assessment underestimated the widespread local availability of such items as bottled water, buckets, soap, and water storage tanks. Whether or not supplies were procured locally or airlifted from the Europe by DEC agencies depended on the local knowledge of the logistics staff deployed. Those agencies deploying expatriates in the initial stages like Oxfam, SCF, and the Red Cross preferred to go for airlifts, while those like HelpAge India with a strong local procurement capacity were able to

procure all their supplies on the local market. The timing of supplies requests from some agencies shared with the evaluation team shows that normally these were made within 6 days after the Earthquake by staff new to India. Once it became more aware of the local capacity available, especially from the Gujarat State Government's Water Board (GWSSB), Oxfam quickly found that their role needed to shift away from the provision of equipment (much of it air-freighted) to monitoring the supply of water by government tankers to outlying villages (ref. March 2001 Monitoring report).

While DEC agencies were aware of the overall technical standards for water availability laid down by Sphere, they did not find Sphere indicators for water and sanitation really relevant. Since Kutch is a drought area, and lack of water a perennial issue, it was impossible for DEC members to achieve Sphere indicators in relation to water consumption, especially at the height of the dry season, and it might also have been inadvisable in that this might have resulted in people consuming more water in the long term than can be supplied. As the agencies said in their self evaluation:

‘In many areas however, access to water (quality & quantity) does not meet Standards of Sphere. During the dry season many villages rely on sporadic delivery of tankered water. As this was the situation pre-earthquake addressing this issue was considered a development question and did not become a priority for intervention in the emergency phase.....(Our) emergency responses focused on repair and rehabilitation of existing water supplies, not development of new systems. Therefore, the flow rates, quality of water etc were limited by the previous functioning of the repaired water system. In areas where agencies were working people received a minimum of 15 litres per person per day and ...around the maximum of 250 persons per outlet.’

The State Water Authority, the GWSSB, is a relatively competent agency and (following the earthquake) became well-resourced. Oxfam was right to see the GWSSB as critical to any response in this sector, but (as argued in the first part of this evaluation) it tended to underestimate the GWSSB's capacity to mobilise emergency water tanks and tanker distribution systems in response to the earthquake.

**1.5.2. Drainage.** *The key indicator for Sphere on drainage is that there is no standing wastewater around water points or elsewhere in the settlement. Even at the start of the dry season, 9 months after the earthquake, drainage in most sites where DEC agencies had assisted with water supplies was still poor, and the resulting stagnant and dirty water was a potential health hazard. DEC members feel that “Inadequate attention was paid to this issue in the planning stage of water source development.” This weakness also reflects a lack of long-term engagement with the community at the time when these works were designed. One example of good practice was implemented by CARE's partner NGO Cohesion which spent very small amounts of money on vegetable seeds and has used waste water for individual vegetable plots.*

**1.5.3. Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion.** This is an area where adherence to Sphere Standards may be leading some DEC agencies into difficulties. While Sphere Standards do not explicitly require the use of toilets, they do stress the need for hygiene promotion. Oxfam was sufficiently concerned about existing (pre-earthquake) practices of water collection that they decided to airlift buckets on the assumption that these would be more hygienic than the water containers

normally used in Gujarat. SCF also supplied buckets, jerry cans, and plastic tanks but they found that people were reluctant to use them. As the self-evaluation by DEC members concluded, *“water storage containers distributed by some agencies (buckets & jerrycans) were found to be inappropriate and unacceptable to the local population. There was probably inadequate community consultation before purchase of items.”*

Also too much soap was provided, to the extent that one respondent in our beneficiary survey thought that the DEC agency (Oxfam) distributing soap must be some kind of soap company! This was an example of where greater information exchange between agencies would have prevented mistakes, as some agencies distributed soap in hygiene kits, whilst others did not consider it a priority as they knew that communities had alternative access to soap.

The earthquake took place in the dry winter season. The major initial sanitation problems were in the towns (where few DEC agencies or their partners worked.) In the rural areas many people are not accustomed to latrines: settlements are often small and scattered; the soil is sandy and rarely intensively cultivated, while water is scarce. While latrines may be popular (to an extent) with women, they are a lower priority for men. This was therefore a sector in which Sphere standards in relation to sanitation may appear to conflict with article 5 of the Red Cross Code, which commits agencies to “respect culture and custom”. The perception of the local NGO Abhiyan is that too many international agencies arrived with a preset agenda in relation to sanitation, and that this agenda contained conflicting objectives: on the one hand they wanted to take some immediate actions to reduce the risk of faecal contamination and the spread of water-borne diseases, while on the other they were trying, as the DEC agencies put it to *“very quickly change a lifetime of beliefs and practices whilst operating in a complex environment with many conflicting influences”*.

*The result was that, in order to comply with at least their own interpretation of Sphere Standards, considerable time and DEC resources have been wasted on the unsuccessful promotion of latrines. As our shelter report (Appendix 5) indicates, in theory it would be desirable to include latrines where possible in new designs for individual houses or whole communities. However considerable long-term investment in health promotion will also be needed to ensure that the latrines included in some of the DEC-funded housing schemes will ever be used, and to prevent them becoming a health hazard in themselves. Few lessons seem to have been learned from the Orissa Cyclone, where Oxfam also ran into difficulties trying to implement a large sanitation programme.*

**1.5.4. Rubbish disposal.** Given the amount of debris and rubbish resulting from the earthquake Sphere Standards on this issue were relevant, but this was also an area in which agencies found some difficulties. Once again this problem was most acute in the towns, but agencies found that even when equipment like wheelbarrows, tools, and rubbish skips had been supplied, it was still difficult to get municipalities and communities to move rubbish. But there is little evidence that rubbish has presented more of a health hazard since the earthquake than it did before it, and this Sphere Standard is one of many which appears culturally specific.

**1.5.5. Shelter and Site Planning.** Even though the need for people's participation in assessments is emphasized in the Sphere Standards the opinion survey (Appendix 4) found that people in general, and women in particular, did not feel they had been given much opportunity to participate in agencies' assessments in relation to shelter materials and shelter. This same survey also found that people need to be given better information by agencies about the options open to them, especially in relation to shelter.

Tents were initially in high demand, and some were still in use 9 months after the earthquake, but they gave little protection in the intense summer heat and perished quickly. DEC agencies reported in their collective self-evaluation that *"there were discrepancies in the numbers of blankets allocated to each family. Quality also varied, and there are some reports of adults receiving child sized blankets."* Initially too much clothing was distributed and much was found to be too urban and "westernized" for a rural population. In relation to polyethylene sheeting, there were some reports of the sheeting supplied being of lower quality or smaller dimensions than that specified by UNHCR and endorsed by Sphere. This is certainly a key item in which for future disasters in India it would be desirable to achieve some greater standardization using the recommended UN/Sphere dimensions.

In the provision of both temporary and long-term shelter NGOs have been playing only a minor role compared to that of the Government and UN system. It was not therefore really practical for DEC agencies to insist on adherence to Sphere indicators in this sector. Given the widespread damage, and people's reluctance to move far from their homes, the Sphere key indicator of 3.5 to 4.5 sq. metres per person appears too high in the Indian context. As DEC members said:

*"The minimum house size is difficult to achieve, particularly for those with larger families. The cost becomes an issue as agencies would generally like to help more families with a smaller but adequate house, rather than fewer families with elaborate houses. There is also an issue of land ownership and plot size as in some cases the Sphere recommended house size exceeds the plot size available to the family."*

*There is a further issue in relation to the provision of temporary shelter, where DEC members found people valued security of assets, and proximity to their old homes, more than having a particular quota of space available. In reality the provision of temporary shelter requires a series of compromises between quality, quantity, and different sorts of materials. It would be useful if future Sphere guidelines could discuss more explicitly the difficult choices that agencies involved in shelter activities have to make, often with very limited time and technical knowledge.*

## **1.6. Participation.**

As the section on shelter makes clear DEC agencies found it difficult to implement the Sphere Standard that *'the disaster-affected population has the opportunity to participate in the design & implementation of the assistance programme'*. Temporary shelter was a difficult area, with people giving a higher priority than agencies to issues of security, both of property and of family members (ref March monitoring report). In both temporary and permanent shelter there were many instances where DEC members did find ways of getting greater community involvement, for instance CARE's mason training programme, but in general DEC agencies felt they were

working under a severe time pressure for at least 3 reasons: First, at least in Kutch District they feared that if they did not show results quickly then other agencies would take their place. Secondly they felt a pressure to finalise temporary shelter before the monsoon, and finally most but not all DEC members were striving to maintain disbursement rates so that they could stay within the DEC 9-month expenditure period. In addition uncertainties about government plans in relation to village adoption, and difficulties in obtaining both the necessary government permissions, and government compensation meant that agencies taking on construction work have become more focused on these issues than on community participation (ref. Appendix 5).

DEC agencies in their self-evaluation have agreed that these different pressures have meant that participation by beneficiaries in the shelter programme has been below Sphere guidelines, and here have been too few opportunities for families to have any strong input into the designs of their permanent houses even though DEC members agreed this would have been desirable. This is especially disappointing given the previous involvement of many DEC agencies in the shelter programme following the last major Indian earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra and the lessons that should have been learned from that operation.

## **Section Two: Appropriateness of Sphere Standards**

### **2.1. Relief and rehabilitation**

A key characteristic of the earthquake response was that the relief period was relatively brief. Roads, railways, electricity supplies and the different levels of local government were soon restored to normal, and there was no reported malnutrition or disease outbreaks as a result of the earthquake. This was very different from the Orissa cyclone and related tidal wave which left many communities cut off by standing water and damaged roads for weeks. This meant that from an early stage most DEC agencies were focusing on reconstruction. In fact less DEC funds were used for this immediate relief stage than might have been expected: Action Aid decided not to do relief work at all, Merlin focused on the reconstruction of health facilities, and Oxfam initially spent DFID funds and only started spending DEC funding in April. Most Sphere Standards apply more to the provision of relief assistance than they do to reconstruction, and it would be useful if there could be greater clarity about the extent to which they can be applied to rehabilitation.

### **2.2 Relevance of Sphere**

In their self-evaluation DEC members found 3 overall problems in relation to the application of Sphere Standards in the Gujarat context:<sup>4</sup>

- 1. The Standards imply that communities have no resources or capacities to contribute, and that aid agencies have a responsibility to entirely meet all the needs of beneficiaries.*
- 2. Sphere Standards do not reflect differing circumstances of emergency/disaster, differing norms in different countries, or adequately reflect cultural differences (eg. issue of Sanitation).*

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<sup>4</sup> All these points have been shared with Sphere Project Staff who feel that they are based on misunderstandings about Sphere “standards” both by international agencies and their partners in India.

3. *Lack of Local Ownership- The legitimacy of insisting on the use of Sphere Standards with partner agencies was also questioned. Partners were not involved in the development of standards, and may not subscribe to the standards for the local context, considering them inappropriate, unrealistic or unachievable.*

DEC members concluded that Sphere Standards were really more applicable for Complex Emergencies, normally conflict-related, where people are displaced persons and need relief aid over a longer period.

However if, as DEC members argue, ‘*Sphere Standards are sound principles and valuable guidelines to follow to ensure best practice... (but).. they are not wholly applicable and appropriate in all circumstances*’, then we do need to ask whether these standards are in fact general guidelines rather than minimum standards? The problem is that while the Red Cross Code represents a set of working principles, which can be applied more or less universally, Sphere Guidelines specify precise technical indicators which will always be context-specific.

### **2.3. Sphere and evaluation**

Methodologically this evaluation has shown how hard it is to use Sphere Standards for evaluation without some kind of tighter monitoring of agencies’ work throughout a relief operation – a point made also by Oxfam’s own evaluation. This would require one to “accompany” DEC agencies in the field from the very start of their response and to try to “measure” the extent to which their relief efforts were consistent with Sphere Standards. Even so the “retrospective” and self-evaluation method followed in this evaluation has been useful as a learning exercise, and has probably helped increase awareness of the standards themselves amongst DEC members.

### **2.4. Government**

One particular problem with Sphere in the context of Gujarat is that the Minimum Standards do not appear to give sufficient importance to the role of Government both in relief and reconstruction, to the extent that some DEC agencies in Gujarat felt that the guidelines applied more to “failed states” where government was weak or non-existent rather than India. While the Government of India is interested in Sphere Standards and has asked for training, the Gujarat State Government, which has been very active both in relief and reconstruction, is unaware of the Sphere Standards, and this poses particular problems where NGOs aware of Sphere are implementing projects jointly with the Government.

### **2.5 Conclusions**

This evaluation suggests that observance of Sphere Standards is a necessary, but in no way a sufficient, condition for an effective response to a humanitarian emergency. While following Sphere Standards undoubtedly results in an improved technical response by NGOs it does not necessarily assist their performance in a number of other key respects covered elsewhere in this evaluation, and our conclusion is that there is a poor correlation between observance of Sphere Standards and other key performance indicators – especially in relation to the impact, sustainability, and cost effectiveness of rehabilitation initiatives.

The views expressed by DEC members in Gujarat suggest, at the very least, a degree of ambivalence both within the member agencies and their Indian partner NGOs about the need for internationally agreed standards for humanitarian responses. This in turn shows the need both for DEC members and the major national NGOs to promote discussion both of the Humanitarian Charter and Sphere Standards in India long after the current reconstruction programmes in Gujarat have been completed.

## **2. 6 Recommendations**

This study has shown that while there was good awareness of Sphere standards in many agencies, there are still wide differences in the way Sphere standards are interpreted. This suggests that the Sphere Project needs to do further work to help NGOs appreciate the differences between the overall Standards and the more specific indicators. There is also a need to help agencies to contextualize both the Standards and indicators for different sorts of emergencies and locations, and a related need for a more consistent understanding about when agencies need to use their discretion in interpreting these Standards. Thirdly assessment is currently agreed to be a problematic area, and future Sphere Guidelines should clarify standards for assessment: perhaps in the case of sudden impact disasters like earthquakes more distinction should be made between initial assessments and those completed one month or so later when far better information should be available.

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