

TSUNAMI EVALUATION



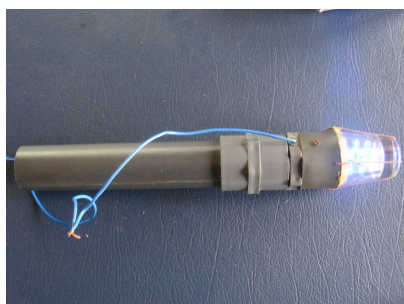
MARCH 2008

Cover Page Photograph.. and its story

The cover picture is of leaf impressions at the threshold of Nihal Ranjit's newly restored house in Mirissa, Sri Lanka, where he lives with his wife and daughter.

Nihal, 41, runs a home based workshop where he makes and sells torches, and repairs radios and televisions. The torches are a very innovative piece of technology, very popular with the fishermen in the area. The shaft is made out of a section of PVC drainpipe and holds the batteries, the light source is a soldered contraption of a set of light emitting diodes, and the cover is made using a local shot-glass, commonly used for sipping hot tea! The torch can run on a single set of batteries for two to three days, and is used by fishermen when they go out to sea at night.

Nihal's house and workshop were partially damaged by the tsunami, and he lost much of his equipment, material and product stock. He received Rupees 105,000 (about 470 GBP) as compensation from the government, 100,000 for the house and 5,000 for the livelihood loss. ActionAid, through its Partner Organisation PRDA (People's Rural Development Agency), supported Nihal with 50,000 Rupees for upgrading his livelihood capacity. The assistance was given in two rounds. Using this money Nihal bought equipment, raw materials, show-cases and work tables, and set up a brand new workshop cum sales outlet in the new portion of his restored house that he built using the government aid. Nihal's monthly income, which was about 5,000 Rupees before the tsunami, now stands at about 9,000 Rupees. The assistance has not only helped his family recover from the livelihood shock, but has led to an overall improvement in income.



Nihal's torch: PVC pipe, battery cells, soldered LEDs and a shot-glass



In his new workshop



With his family in their restored house

The story is a good case-study of post disaster aid. However, the right to human security aspect of the case is very unclear to the project field team. Their interpretation of the rights based approach was *“people who received assistance from us under our rights based approach are now not dependent on the government and the banking system for money”*.

How clear are we of the right to human security approach across the different levels of our team?

In most cases, did we use rights to end poverty, or did we extend financial aid that enhanced assets?

Is it really the same thing?

Note from the Authors

The experience of conducting this study has been a truly educative one. ActionAid's growth trajectory and the resultant questions that emerge are very critical to the organisation's strategic positioning for the future, and its relationship with Partner Organisation NGOs, governments, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the countries where it works. The openness of the organisation and senior staff to face these challenges upfront, and to take a forward looking approach to the current review is appreciable.

The review process was one that started from the laid down TOR, and on the way touched a wide spectrum of information, ranging from community voices at one end to review of very advanced policy and strategy documents of ActionAid, and discussions thereon. As we progressed into the review, the focus moved more from collection of documentary evidence of work carried out, into strategic evaluation of ActionAid and its programmes, their positioning, and their future dimensions. There is a huge body of knowledge that has been generated by ActionAid in the shape of its policy and strategy documents, documentation reports and internal evaluation reports, and the review attempted to tap this body of knowledge and distill results from this and the field evidences.

The overall support provided by Silva, Louise, Hannah and Emma are gratefully acknowledged. We thank all the ActionAid staff interviewed, as this report primarily banks on their testimonies. The insights provided by Roger and Bijay, were particularly useful in setting the context and perspective for this review.

Many provided crucial support for making the field visits possible. We thank Hasantha, Swairee, Harjeet, Fathimath and so many others whom we are unable to name individually here.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge that the people-centric approach of ActionAid has been a highlight of this review. We highly appreciate the spirit of Partner Organisations, CBOs and community members who form the basis of this work, and the cooperation we received from them during our research.

Acronyms

AAI	ActionAid International
ALPS	Accountability, Learning and Planning Systems
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CD	Country Director
CP	Country Programme
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
E-FAST	Emergency First Action Support Team
EAR-ARM	Emergencies Alert, Review And Response Mechanism
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HR	Human Resource
HS	Human Security
IECT	International Emergencies and Conflict Team
MONLAR	Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform
ITT	International Tsunami Team
PRRPs	Participatory Review and Reflection Processes
PVA	Participatory Vulnerability Assessment
RBA	Rights Based Approach
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SHG	Self Help Group
SIFFS	South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies
TMT	Tsunami Management Team
VAW	Violence Against Women

Summary

ActionAid responded to the South Asian Tsunami through its Tsunami Programme covering six countries. The response was within the overall strategic framework of Right to Human Security. The programme was a major achievement in humanitarian terms, and a big opportunity for ActionAid to learn from and improve its processes and future programming. This review aims to synthesise the lessons learned from the Tsunami Programme for assisting ActionAid in utilizing this opportunity to learn and improve.

Major accomplishments

Achieving what ActionAid did in a programme of such a big scale, largely in areas where it was not present earlier, and in very demanding emergency and conflict situations was in itself a creditable feat. Specific 'good things' about the programme were:

- entering and responding at such scale
- openness to learn, modify
- creating a visible niche with RBA
- focus on quality, not just quantity

Points to ponder

Being a widespread and big-budget programme, often in unfamiliar terrain, the experience also threw up challenges highlighting areas where ActionAid needs to think hard and improve systems and programming for the future. Some critical ones are:

- induction process for new staff and partners
- turning value based approaches into simple messages that are understood by field personnel
- institutional learning
- governance as a long term tool
- investing in research and DRR to make future responses easier

ActionAid's distinctive approach

Some distinctive characteristics of ActionAid of relevance for the review are:

- Rights Based Approach
- Accountability and learning framework, putting poor and excluded actors at the centre
- An internationalising organization
- A structure geared to interconnection (matrix work)

The unique positioning has helped ActionAid carve out a distinct niche for itself within the humanitarian sector. However, there is evidence of a gap in the understanding of these dimensions, and of the overall framework of Human Security and the Rights Based Approach between the senior management in the organization and its field staff and Partner Organisations' field staff.

The Tsunami Programme

ActionAid reached out to 757,000 tsunami affected people in six countries. Seventy percent of these were girls and women. However, ActionAid staff and partners had to work hard to find their way around existing systems and establish new ones, and learnt many things the hard way.

ActionAid's Tsunami Programme needs to be appreciated for finding the right spaces to intervene, which were not always the most obvious and conventional ones. Social processes were an integral part of the programming, and ActionAid's people centric approach, both in its own staffing as well as in the way it worked with communities,

made very positive impacts that are recognized across the board. Processes of transparency and accountability to beneficiaries were very conscious efforts. These included the Social Audits, Community Reviews and Public Hearings.

Based on the actual and planned expenditure by country and objective, it was decided to focus this review more on India, Sri Lanka and Maldives, and on objectives 1, 3 and 5, since maximum investments had been made on these. Other countries and objectives are also covered, but in lesser detail.

Programming in the Human Security context

ActionAid designed and delivered the Tsunami Programme within the context of its Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies Strategic Plan 2005–2010. Evaluation findings have been studied on a matrix based on directly relevant objectives and priorities of Action as per the Strategic Plan document. The following trends emerge clearly:

1. The programme activities show strong evidence supporting the Human Security Objective no. 3 - To build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies. This is because one of the programme objectives too is focused on sustainable livelihood support. The same trend can also be evident supporting Human Security Objective no. 5 - To assure poor people access to appropriate assistance and basic services in conflict and emergencies, as this objective matches the programme objective of just and accountable governance.
2. There is limited evidence (except in Maldives) of activities addressing root causes of disaster. (Objective No. 1 - To reduce the hazards that threaten people). ActionAid's stand is that strengthening of institutions using high-quality political analysis of the situation has helped people come out of vulnerabilities. The reviewers, however, feel that the nature of people's institutions strengthening observed does not, from a scientific point of view, necessarily lead to disaster reduction.
3. The activity pattern in the four countries studied in this consultation reveals there is limited interpretation at local level on DRR and related issues. The Hyogo Framework of Action and its translation in local activities too is limited.
4. Programme activities align well with ActionAid's Rights Based Approach. There is substantial evidence that Rights promoted by ActionAid specially Women's Rights, the Right to Education, Right to Food and the Right to Just and Democratic Governance seem to reflect strongly in the programme activities. The approach itself, which is aimed at using people's strengths to access rights by themselves, is more of a process and was observed to have delivered varying levels of successes in different contexts. ActionAid's ability to work with a range of strategies to capitalize on this approach is appreciable.

Approaches and positioning

ActionAid's approach of working with people at the centre of the programming, and partnership spirit at the centre of implementation, is laudable. The approach was seen to work well on the ground in many cases during the field visits. Some problem areas were noticed in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, which were due to the fact that new partnerships had to be established in an emergency situation in these countries. Being new countries for ActionAid, these also threw up challenges for some of the assumptions that ActionAid went in with.

Field observations highlighted that technical support must be ensured for specialized activities like shelter, water-sanitation and psychosocial aid. Within these, shelter is very critical since a lot of resources go into providing shelter, and a job badly done can lead to major losses, or even worse, threaten lives of inhabitants. While well intentioned, the approach of making something technical like shelter construction very participatory has had a severely detrimental effect on the quality of shelter delivery.

ActionAid's approach post-tsunami has been to reach out to groups specially those 'who were considered not affected'; Further the organization sought to 'collectivise' such groups and using strong advocacy through State and National consultation bring them on the mainstream. This is indeed laudable. This could have been better channelized, if they were supported by strong benchmarking. In absence of clear interpretation of the concept of 'human security'; actions on the ground lacked clear focus. The gap in general understanding among local staff and further among field partners curtailed an opportunity for strong vertical linkage.

ActionAid is a uniquely positioned organisation within the humanitarian sector. It should not try to become a mega organization driven by a flood of resources. It should also not take up the space that rightfully belongs to the local and national organisations. ActionAid will pay a great service to the humanitarian sector from its strategic 'in-between' position wherefrom it gets people's voices heard, and empowers people towards achieving due rights, accessing resources, building assets and reducing risks.

Making a difference – to others and self

In terms of benefits delivered to the tsunami affected population on the ground, the implementation of the programme was found to be effective. It was a well positioned, delivered and monitored humanitarian assistance intervention. However, viewed with a lens of ActionAid's Rights to End Poverty approach, thinking needs to go into positioning of the organisation's work vis-à-vis relief and rights based work. There appears to be a disconnect between ActionAid International's strategic vision based on rights, and the relief and rehabilitation work done by Partner Organisations on the ground. While the strategy documents and discussions with senior management gave the picture of a clearly understood rights based approach, the implementing personnel of the POs lacked this clarity, and were found to be in more of a traditional relief mode of thinking

The biggest challenge for ActionAid in being effective with respect to its goals and approach is of institutional learning. ActionAid has a very high staff turnover, which, coupled with the fact that ActionAid is a fast growing organization, makes the issue of learning even more important, and the consequences of not learning even more damaging.

Systems – the backbone support

The Tsunami Programme covered six countries, of which ActionAid was already working in three. The management system itself started with an International Coordination Team, which was replaced a year later by a Tsunami Management Team. While the approach of 'matrix of accountability' is very sound in principle and has been approached and put in place well by ActionAid, the Tsunami Programme management process itself has two sides to it. On one hand it has demonstrated an openness and will on part of ActionAid to change with situations and to evolve its management systems to be more inclusive. At the same time, on the other hand it has created a dynamic and complex system that was found to be not clearly understood by staff and partners alike.

ActionAid consciously aims to be accountable to its beneficiaries. Conscious programming based on accountability principles is well demonstrated in projects across the programme countries. However, the approach also throws up a number of conflicts and dilemmas within ActionAid's work:

- Ethical dilemmas facing ActionAid staff in emergency situations
- Rights based accountability vs. financial accountability
- Programmes vs. finance

Programming processes

The openness in ActionAid's programming system to allow programming basics to arise from the ground up is creditable. The Tsunami Programme has many components that are outside the conventional scope of such post disaster programmes, and it is evident that these have arisen from the locally felt needs that have played an important role in determining programme design. With this same principle, Partner Organisations also enjoyed a position of substantial influence in the programming process, and the partners largely drove needs assessments, planning consultations, proposal writing and mid-course adjustments.

Partnering with the government has been a tricky issue, though the Rights Based Approach also implies that as the ultimate custodian of rights, the State also needs to be made a Partner Organisation in the long term process. Within ActionAid too there are multiple views on the activism role, the most balanced one being that the organization should take the approach of using PVA and similar tools to inform people of their vulnerabilities and rights and let people take a stand for themselves.

Linking relief, rehabilitation and risk reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction is a stated area of integrated work within all DEC supported Tsunami programmes. However, incorporating DRR in a massive relief operation is not an easy task. ActionAid needs to specifically review its DRR approach within humanitarian assistance work. In case the organization takes a conscious stand that it cannot incorporate DRR in the immediate relief phases then let this be made clear and DRR be taken as a linked but separate area of work. However, if the organization decides to keep DRR as an integral part of its disaster response work right from the beginning, then much homework will need to be done in advance to make this possible.

Channels of delivery

ActionAid is, and is viewed from the outside as, an organization based on principles and steered by a group of very able, dedicated and knowledgeable individuals. There is a high level of autonomy given to teams, country programmes, and individual duty bearers in the organisation's way of working. This is very evident in the attitude of the staff at national and field levels. Passion and motivation drive the team.

On the flip side, autonomy has brought with it an element of ad-hoc decision making based on local contexts and team perceptions, which is very strongly viewed as an 'inconsistency' in the way the organization works. The basis for decisions to get engaged in some emergencies and not in others is unclear to many.

ActionAid was not present in Sri Lanka, Maldives, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India before the tsunami. Finding partners was a major problem. Many of them could not easily take on the rights based approach. Some partnerships had to be closed. Others were overwhelmed by the sudden growth in their scale of work and funding. While the Partner Organisations were involved in the decision making process, inadequate induction and orientation processes led to problems. Partnership protocol is an area seeking attention.

Working through partners makes ActionAid vulnerable in difficult situations that arise specially in case of new partnerships and new countries. There are a large number of variables that influence the effectiveness of programmes, such as convergence of approaches, management systems, understanding of concepts, and ability to contextualise to local situation. This complexity and vulnerability was most visible in Sri Lanka and Maldives, where ActionAid entered after the tsunami to achieve its targets within its stated ideological framework, but the partners were too new to ActionAid's approach, and were too overwhelmed with the load of post-tsunami work. These are the countries where the ActionAid's principles seem to have been most difficult to defend and sustain, even though there have been improvements over time. ActionAid feels that there are issues of "compatibility" when starting work with partners – and perhaps rather than being vulnerable it is a challenge how the compatibility will evolve over time. The reviewers continue to feel that these issues of compatibility and the time taken to resolve them lead to a situation of compromises, which can get critical in times of urgency as was the case immediately after the tsunami. Establishing partnerships after major disasters is far more complex and risky than doing so in more passive developmental programmes, and requires stronger filters and safety nets.

Summary of Recommendations

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| 1. Review the organisation's work profile. Distinguish between pure humanitarian aid work, and work with a substantial bearing on rights. Position the work at two levels: humanitarian aid, and rights based work, with some overlaps. | Page 4 |
| 2. Treat technical interventions like shelter as very specialised activities, providing required technical support and ensuring at all costs that the minimum performance standards are met. Do careful balancing of participatory approaches, technical support, and leadership role. | Page 11 |
| 3. Capture the lessons and strengthen institutional learning. Establish a link between reporting, documentation, knowledge accumulation, and learning processes. Develop and establish a formal induction process for new staff and partners, wherein basics of the organisation's rights based ideology, operational framework and work processes are passed on and absorbed. | Page 15 |
| 4. Bring programmes and systems, particularly financial systems, closer, and link programmatic accountability with financial accountability. | Page 18 |
| 5. Continue and nurture people centric programming, but with greater investments in partnerships, constructive engagement with governments, and incorporation of DRR as a developmental agenda. | Page 21 |
| 6. Continue and strengthen person centric team building, though with systems for greater consistency in decision making and greater accountability for country programmes. | Page 22 |
| 7. Develop and put in place a stronger partnership protocol. | Page 24 |

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1. Understanding 'Human Security'

Human Security is an overall strategic framework under which the Tsunami Programme was carried out. It sets guiding principles for the way ActionAid works, some of which are a little hard for field personnel to understand

In 2004 Human Security in Conflict & Emergencies was selected as one of the six priority themes for ActionAid International's new strategy – Rights to End Poverty 2005-2010¹. It was a recognition within the organisation of the need to make a more concerted response to violent conflict and emergencies. The strategy also highlighted ActionAid's distinctive approach and experience in emergencies.

The strategic approach to Human Security work was fleshed out in the Human Security in Conflict & Emergencies Strategic Plan 2005-2010. It provides a strategic framework that describes how ActionAid works to mitigate the causes and effects of emergencies and conflict for poor and excluded people. The strategic plan takes a rights-based approach to emergencies and conflict work. This approach puts poor women, men, girls and boys at the centre of perceptions and analysis and focuses on the issues they cite as important. It also directs attention to the responsibilities of the state and powerful institutions to protect and empower poor and excluded people and to work together with partners and alliances to hold states, governments and institutions accountable for human security. Therefore issues of power and gender are central to ActionAid's understanding and approach to human security.

Highlights of the work in the past years include responding to the tsunami in the six countries where ActionAid worked. A substantial amount of this work has already been evaluated at various levels, both internally and externally. It is important that the lessons from this work are sufficiently brought out and models of good practice drawn to help inform future work.

ActionAid's distinctive approach

Some distinctive characteristics of ActionAid of relevance for the review are:

Rights-based Approach. As highlighted in its Rights to End Poverty international strategy, ActionAid is an organisation that takes a rights-based approach. We concentrate on "deepening our focus on poverty eradication by addressing unequal power relations and strengthening our rights-based approach and methods".

Accountability and learning framework, putting poor and excluded actors at the centre. ActionAid strives to improve the quality of its planning and analysis of change through ALPS (Accountability, Learning and Planning System). ALPS requires that each planning / review process look closely at principles such as Accountability, Learning, Transparency, Power and Women Rights. ALPS is also based on a set of shared attitudes and behaviours; and it demands the inclusion and participation of all relevant stakeholders (first and foremost the poor and excluded) in all planning processes.

An internationalising organization. The structure and governance of AAI reflect our international nature – sharing power across the north and south, acting together with one voice from local to international. Following a regionalisation process, ActionAid moved its headquarters to Johannesburg and is shifting its decision-making to its affiliates (in the north as well as in the south).

A structure geared to interconnection ("matrix work"). ActionAid recognizes that the effectiveness and impact of our work depends on the ability to work in diverse, flexible and empowered teams. The organization provides space and incentives for staff to work within and between geographical divisions, functions and themes.

¹ The other priority themes are: women's rights, right to education, right to food, right to life of dignity in face of HIV and AIDS, and right to just and democratic governance. www.actionaid.org/assets/pdf%5Crigh2endpoverty.pdf

At the heart of the Human Security theme lies the International Emergencies and Conflict team (IECT). The team is a central resource providing a service to country programmes to improve the scale and quality of ActionAid's emergencies and conflict work, implementing an international policy programme and contributing to ActionAid's profile and brand. The team works closely with country programmes that have prioritised human security work, supporting alignment to the human security strategic plan and identifying the implications of their work beyond their own boundaries to deliver the international component of the plan.

The distinctive structure of ActionAid means that the International Emergencies and Conflict Team has, in most cases, no direct role in the management of emergency programmes. Within countries, Human security work is planned within national frameworks and delivered by local staff and / or partners. Under the Tsunami Response Programme this role seems to have come under huge stress, and had to step into the country domains to initiate action and then to institutionalize the large scale intervention. This may be taken as a cue for IECT's emergent role as an initiator and facilitator in times and situations of need. For this role to be played out to the optimum, IECT's role for knowledge and capacity development of its new programmes is also important, and could have been stronger and better organized in advance under the Tsunami Response Programme.

Human Security within the Rights Based Approach

The Right to Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies is one of ActionAid's six strategic priorities². The International Strategy states that ActionAid's actions will be prioritized in the areas of intersection between the six themes, since these six rights-based themes overlap and intersect with each other. The evaluation process looks at the areas of intersection between the Right to Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies theme and the other five themes, as observed under the Tsunami Programme.

Were links understood and addressed?

Women's Rights

"We will continue to treat an emergency as an opportunity for positive change to empower women by giving them power in the processes of recovery and helping them to develop new skills."³

In the document - Tsunami Response, A Human Rights Assessment, one of the key findings noted is that Women are being routinely excluded from decision-making. Further, Government policies have failed to offer new opportunities for women⁴.

ActionAid's recovery programme had strong component of building capacity of women and women's groups. Self Help Groups were promoted in India and Sri Lanka, while women-headed households were specially observed to have been supported in the Maldives. PRRP reports of the programme across all the countries have consistently reported inclusion of all women-headed households in the programme interventions.

The Right to Education

"During conflict and emergencies, when people are displaced, normal schooling conditions are severely disrupted or impossible. Maintaining some sort of education system or establishing a temporary set-up, can help children who have been traumatized by the disaster, return to some sort of normality."⁵

² Rights to End Poverty – ActionAid International Strategy 2005-2010

³ Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005 -2010, ActionAid International

⁴ Tsunami Response, A Human Rights Assessment, PDHRE, People's Movement for Human Rights Learning Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network, January 2006

Action Aid's response activities covered issues such as continued basic educational support to children. Furthermore, in India, Disaster Preparedness Training to schools and communities ensured that communities are better prepared for the future. Though this is apparently a DRR issue, it finds coverage under the Right to Education since it is part of Priority for Action 3 of the Hyogo Framework of Action and Millennium Development Goal 2, both of which deal with education. The Elated School Campaign in Sri Lanka is particularly noteworthy.

The Right to Food

"The root cause of food insecurity and hunger lies in the denial of rights and unequal access and control over natural resources such as land, water, seeds and other farm inputs. This is exacerbated during natural disasters and conflict. The livelihoods of local communities are compromised and often destroyed, thus undermining people's capacity to cope, survive and recover." (Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005 -2010, ActionAid International).

Further, it was noted in the Human Rights Assessment⁶ that "Buffer zones" have been used to remove people from coastal areas under the guise of safety. This has jeopardized the livelihoods of those who rely on the sea for a living.

ActionAid strongly stood by communities and Partner Organisation championing the cause of fishermen's right to the sea. Peoples' caravans, meetings and rallies in India and Sri Lanka ensured that the Governments couldn't simply impose buffer zones citing safety as a reason, while allowing other trade activities such as hotels to come up.

The Right to life and dignity in the face of HIV / AIDS

"HIV / AIDS is increasingly being seen as a security issue in the sense that it challenges human security and poses a threat socially, politically, economically and militarily – or the most conventional notion of security. Throughout disasters, access to appropriate health services is essential. HIV / AIDS is most likely to spread during displacement of populations during disasters and conflict." (Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005 -2010, ActionAid International)

Wherever, the need was felt, awareness programmes on HIV / AIDS were organized by ActionAid and its Partner Organisation. In the Maldives, a cadre of community trainers was mobilized to carry out training on HIV / AIDS. In India, support was also provided to initiate appropriate livelihoods for the affected and infected people, which resulted in bringing back or building their confidence.

The Right to Just and Democratic Governance

"Bad governance, corruption, inequality and unaddressed structural factors contribute to countries susceptibility to violent conflicts and lack of disaster preparedness. Human security should be the concern of all states." (Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005 -2010, ActionAid International)

The Tsunami Response, A Human Rights Assessment notes that the Tsunami has had a more severe impact on marginalized groups. Deep-rooted inequalities based on caste, class, gender, nationality and ethnicity have been magnified by discriminatory policies and practices. (Tsunami Response, A Human Rights Assessment, PDHRE, People's Movement for Human Rights Learning Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network, January 2006)

In India, ActionAid programmes took up the cause of the marginalized, and "those considered not affected". The cause of non-settlers in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the sea gypsies in Thailand was supported so ensure that they are eligible for government's support. In the Maldives, the Partner Organisation trained CBOs in various islands to monitor human rights violations.

"The biggest challenge is the change of gear required during emergencies"
: ActionAid Staff

⁵ Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005 -2010, ActionAid International

⁶ Tsunami Response, A Human Rights Assessment, PDHRE, People's Movement for Human Rights Learning Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network, January 2006

**“There is a tension about the need to right in the long run, but to be effective in the short term”
: ActionAid Staff**

**“Delivering on the ground because ‘people are in desperate need’ is not RBA”
: ActionAid Staff**

**“Your niche is that you get local voices heard... but that doesn’t always tell you what to do on the programme side”
: External NGO representative at IECT Annual Meeting**

Recommendation 1:

Review the organisation’s work profile. Distinguish between pure humanitarian aid work, and work with a substantial bearing on rights. Position the work at two levels: humanitarian aid, and rights based work, with some overlaps.

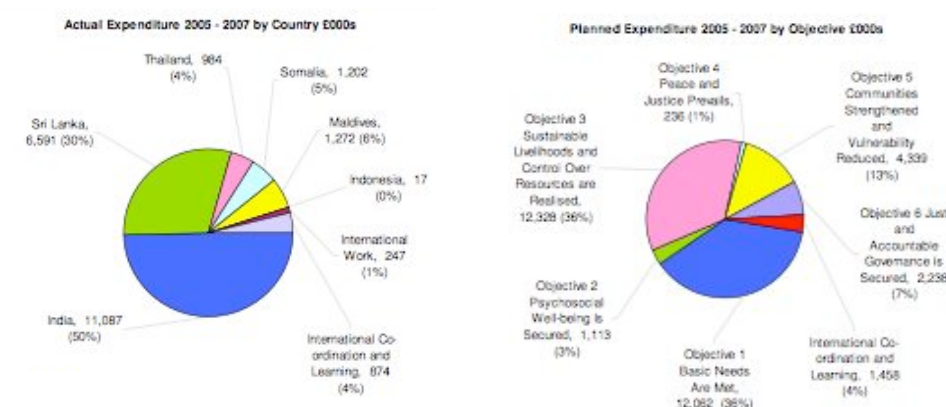
2. The Tsunami Programme

ActionAid reached out to 757,000 tsunami affected people in six countries. Seventy percent of these were girls and women. However, ActionAid staff and partners had to work hard to find their way around existing systems and establish new ones, and learnt many things the hard way.

Finding the right spaces

ActionAid's Tsunami Programme needs to be appreciated for finding the right spaces to intervene, which were not always the most obvious and conventional ones. Social processes were an integral part of the programming, and ActionAid's people centric approach, both in its own staffing as well as in the way it worked with communities, made very positive impacts that are recognized across the board.

Processes of transparency and accountability to beneficiaries were very conscious efforts. These included the Social Audits⁷, Community Reviews⁸ and Public Hearings⁹. There were examples of how these systems have delivered on the ground. The services of two persons were terminated after they were found to be embezzling funds, and this came out from the community accountability processes. Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India saw a community led movement against poor housing delivery by the government and the process was enabled by a PVA based information initiative. A coalition of people's networks came together to address the issue of land rights in Tamil Nadu, India. Livelihood analysis and accountability to communities were highlighted in the Sri Lanka programme. School safety came up as a well integrated and community based DRR component in the Thailand programme.



Based on the actual and planned expenditure by country and objective, it was decided to focus this review more on India, Sri Lanka and Maldives, and on objectives 1, 3 and 5, since maximum investments had been made on these. Other countries and objectives are also covered, but in lesser detail.

⁷ Social Audit included transparency boards, vigilance committees, NGO partners visiting communities with copies of bills and vouchers of expenditure every three months, and public hearings.

⁸ Community Reviews entail clustering of communities, and team visits to villages to verify plans at cluster level. The idea is to make communities owners of the information, and not just the source.

⁹ ActionAid shares the budgets and work progress. It invites the media and the public, and also puts the information on websites and in newspapers.

The Tsunami Programme in the Human Security Context

ActionAid designed and delivered the Tsunami Programme within the context of its Human Security strategy. Evaluation findings have been studied on a matrix based on directly relevant objectives and priorities of Action as per the strategy document¹⁰. The matrix evaluation is based on evidence extracted¹¹ to evaluate ActionAid's work against each objective and against each Right. The following trends emerge clearly:

1. The programme activities show strong evidence in support of the Human Security Objective no. 3 - To build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies. This is because one of the programme objectives is focused on sustainable livelihood support. The same trend can also be evident in support of Human Security Objective no. 5 - To assure poor people access to appropriate assistance and basic services in conflict and emergencies, as this objective matches the programme objective of just and accountable governance.
2. There is limited evidence (except in Maldives) of activities addressing root causes of disaster (Objective No. 1 - To reduce the hazards that threaten people). The recovery programmes are therefore not necessarily building local capacity in reducing impact of future disasters.
3. The activity pattern in the three countries studied in this consultation also reveals that limited interpretation exists at local level on DRR and related issues. The Hyogo Framework of Action and its translation in local activities is limited.

Relevant Objectives	Relevant Priorities of Action	Evidence
<i>Objective #1 : To reduce the hazards that threaten poor people</i>	To support civil society initiatives fighting against policies and practices that increase local and regional hazards To improve the security of women	As such, limited evidence could be found on activities addressing root causes of vulnerabilities ¹² . Except in the Maldives, where the programme intervention combined environmental protection and waste recycling with recovery interventions.

¹⁰ ActionAid International, Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005-2010

¹¹ The information is extracted from the following key documents:

- International Tsunami Response Program, Report of the Mid-Term Review and Reflection Progress on Tsunami Response Program of the ActionAid International – India, August 2006
- Tsunami Response, A Human Rights Assessment, PDHRE, People's Movement for Human Rights Learning Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network, January 2006
- Extended Response Plan India 2006-07, ActionAid International
- Extended Response Plan Maldives 2006-07, ActionAid International

¹² ActionAid's stand is that previous reports have highlighted the support provided for building/strengthening local institutions of people and the support of sustainable livelihoods has addressed some of the root causes of the vulnerabilities of the affected people. The reviewers, however, feel that the nature of people's institutions strengthening observed does not, from a scientific point of view and based on the limited evidence available, necessarily lead to disaster reduction.

<p><i>Objective #3 : To build people's resilience to conflict and emergencies</i></p>	<p>To help poor families to increase their resilience against emergencies</p> <p>To help poor communities be more prepared</p> <p>To support people in using their own voice to highlight their vulnerability</p> <p>To continue to build capacity of staff and partners in PVA</p>	<p>People's reports were brought out on critical issues, which highlighted and brought out people's voices about their vulnerabilities. This is expected to help build people's resilience in the long term through its impact on the policy environment.</p> <p>Evidence on increasing resilience by promoting alternate livelihoods is limited. Only in cases where women based Self-Help Groups were organized in income generating activities, do we find increase in family incomes. In the Maldives, 'disaster prepared' agricultural nursery and learning centres in three islands provide training, fertilizers, seeds etc to support sustainable livelihoods. In Sri Lanka some champion cases displayed such gain.</p> <p>Considering high incidence of women-headed households in the Maldives, interventions on increasing women's earnings contributed to greater resilience.</p> <p>Disaster Preparedness training took place in schools, Village MLPs were prepared, Community Funds were mobilized and community assets were promoted in India.</p>
<p><i>Objective #4 : To generate pressure on governments, armed opposition groups and institutions to uphold their responsibility to protect people in conflict and emergencies</i></p>	<p>To mobilize poor people to call for greater accountability in governance in addressing conflict and disasters</p> <p>To support the implementation of the HFA</p> <p>To monitor actions and policies of governments and advocate for improvement or offer support where their performance does not meet acceptable standards</p>	<p>In India, small fishermen, Dalits, Tribals, Religious Minorities were targeted. Their needs for relief and rehabilitation were met. They were mobilized for gaining space in the decision making process for retaining their rights.¹³ In Andhra, the Irula tribe was considered non-eligible for housing compensation because they lived in semi-permanent structures. ActionAid partners' advocacy efforts helped restore their rights. They now have permanent housing.</p> <p>There was lack of evidence on activities related implementation of the HFA in Tsunami recovery.</p>
<p><i>Objective #5 : To assure poor people access to appropriate assistance and basic services in conflict and emergencies</i></p>	<p>To respond to emergencies</p> <p>To promote participation of women and most vulnerable groups in the identification of needs and in decision making process for provision of assistance</p> <p>To provide aid based on local production and promote protection from damaging import practices</p> <p>To protect the rights of displaced people</p> <p>To build ActionAid's capacity to respond to emergencies and conflict</p>	<p>In all programmes, 'sustainable livelihoods' was one of the four principal objectives. As a result, the programme activities went beyond meeting basic needs – promoted sustainable livelihoods, including alternate livelihoods and strengthened community organizations.</p> <p>In the Maldives, the Partner Organisation advocated with government on adopting community based decision making on livelihood development.</p> <p>In the Maldives, monthly focus group meetings were held with women's groups on livelihood issues.</p> <p>Special assistance was provided to women and children in form of awareness on preventive health, nutritional support and basic education.</p> <p>The rights of the people in relation to the Government of India's policy on Coastal Zone Management were highlighted. Mass forces, such as Caravan in Andhra Pradesh were organized.</p>

¹³ Report of the Mid-Term Review and Reflection Progress on Tsunami Response Program of the ActionAid International – India, August 2006

In addition to the above analysis carried out under the current review, one of the past reviews on Tsunami Coordination by Jackson¹⁴ identifies critical successes and failures, which are fairly in line with the findings of this review. The highlights of the Jackson review with which our findings align are as below.

Some laudable successes were:

- Getting out there immediately, being visible on the ground
- Someone on the ground taking a lead to set things up, making things happen
- Making use of contacts in the region to get things moving
- Very early involvement and commitment of CEO and other senior people
- Getting a team in place to co-ordinate activity that was essential in the early stages.
- Having a longer term plan to resource the work
- Keeping people in the relevant countries and in the wider world well informed, day by day about what was happening on the ground – everyone felt involved and informed
- Working in ways which were true to AAI values and approach – participation of communities and partners and taking a rights based approach to the work
- Planning for a time to stand back and take a longer view

Some things that didn't work so well, and lead to lessons learnt the hard way were:

- Slow recruitment for both the international team (recruitment only just complete in 0106) and for the in-country programmes
- A lack of clarity about expectations of partners and of ways of working
- A lack of clarity about the practical implications of working in a new way – i.e. in a matrix management structure
- There has not been sufficient sharing of operational experience between the in-country programmes, and the smaller programmes been at a disadvantage at times
- There is a feeling sometimes in the in-country programmes that the international team lacks a *deep* understanding and appreciation of their particular world and at times this has led to less effective working than hoped for.

¹⁴ International Coordination Structure of Tsunami Programme; Report for ActionAid – Tsunami Coordination; Jackson leadership development diversity; January / February 2006

3. Approaches and positioning

ActionAid entered the fray in new countries with more assumptions than local experiences. Approaches were sound in principle, but time was very short for adjusting and fine-tuning to local contexts.

ActionAid designed and delivered the Tsunami Programme within the context of its Human Security strategy. The strategy document¹⁵ lays down the long term perspective of ActionAid, and this has been used as the basis for reviewing validity of the approach in context of the Human Security strategy. Translating the long term perspective of the strategy into specific short term activities was not an easy task.

Participation

ActionAid's approach of working with focus on the ground level needs and capacities is laudable. The basis of the rights based approach is that needs will be identified at the community level through participatory processes like PVA, and the process will be used to educate communities about their rights. This itself will be an empowering process, and will enable people to demand what is rightfully theirs. This is seen as a process that will be sustainable in addition to being community driven. One of the strongest elements of this approach is the partnership approach, and the way in which ActionAid tries to promote programme design to take place at the field level, driven by local Partner Organisations.

The one issue to be addressed in this regard is the capacity of partners staff, and the extent of participatory processes followed by partners in preparing their plans. In two of the project areas visited, copies of the proposals were not even available in the project offices. Partner Organisation staff did not know much about the proposal or report writing processes. The organization head, sitting in the national head office, carried out all of this. Field staff was conversant with the process of displaying transparency boards for public viewing on site, and explaining them to visitors. This process was however a little mechanical and can be carried out in more engaging ways. The approach taken by ActionAid to put the Partner Organisations in the driving seat, did not appear strongly within the Partner Organisations themselves trying to put the communities in the driving seat.

Shelter – a different cup of tea

Technical support must be ensured for specialized activities under shelter, water-sanitation and psychosocial aid, and any other such subject areas where ill planned actions can cause harm. Within these, shelter is very critical since a lot of resources go into providing shelter, and a job badly done can lead to major losses, or even worse, threaten the lives of inhabitants. It is alarming to see the structural lapses on construction sites under the Tsunami Programme. While well intentioned, the approach of making something technical like shelter construction very participatory has had a severely detrimental effect on the quality of shelter delivery. The critical problems with the shelter construction activities are:

- Engineer hired by Partner Organisation and ActionAid at start of programme decides generic design and specifications. The engineer is not engaged for later stages of construction and site supervision, which is carried out by local masons.
- No staff on ActionAid team or Partner Organisation on the project team at the time of the review has knowledge or experience of construction. Local masons working on the construction have no training whatsoever in safe construction practices. They work with incomplete and even incorrect beliefs.
- In the spirit of promoting beneficiary participation, field staff allows design changes suggested by house-owners. Often, these changes are not to do with the layout plan, but with elements that severely compromise structural safety (See accompanying photographs and story).

¹⁵ ActionAid International, Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies, Strategic Plan 2005-2010

Beautiful houses, but structural safety a concern



The mason constructing Kanti's house in Wenamulla Village, Sri Lanka, believes that the house is very safe and elements will stay together due to the lintel band he has constructed. He has no training, and has only seen and learnt from senior masons on the job. The seniors too had no training. It is a 550 square feet house built with assistance of over 2,500 Pounds.



The lintel band is of no use since there are no corner reinforcements or interlocking. The building has no vertical reinforcement at all. The band is simply floating, thus adding additional cost and increasing dead weight without adding strength to the house. Reinforcements to openings are only cosmetic in nature and are plastered from outside.



Since Kanti wanted lower door heights, this wish was granted, delinking the door frames from the lintel in the process. The space above the door is filled with loose blocks. Once plastered and painted, this will not be visible. Kanti's family is very poor. Her husband is a wage labourer in a coral/lime kiln. They are very grateful for the house.

ActionAid's response is that "ActionAid Sri Lanka did employ engineers while building 350 high-quality houses along the line of Sphere Standards and owner's specific needs". ActionAid also shared pictures of houses constructed by people in Sri Lanka with Action and its partner NGO's support. The houses have been designed (in terms of spatial planning) by architects and engineers to meet the Sphere Standards (the Sphere Standards give specifications of space, not of structural strength), and the reviewers agree with the fact that the houses are beautiful and meet the spatial and aesthetic aspirations of the beneficiaries. The concern, however, remains regarding the structural safety compliance of these houses. While engineering principles may have been kept in mind during the design process, the observations on site show that these are not being followed during the implementation process. It is acknowledged here that this finding is based on observations and interviews across very few construction sites over a couple of days, and is not based on exhaustive sampling. It is also acknowledged that structural study could be carried out only at two sites, since most of the buildings seen had already been finished, and it is impossible to comment on the structural issues of a beautifully plastered and painted building without conducting Non Destructive Tests, which were not carried out under this study due to its limited scope and strategic nature. The reviewers would, however, like to emphasise that well laid out and beautiful looking buildings need not be safe buildings. ActionAid may want to take these findings into consideration and commission a detailed appraisal of its shelter programme by a qualified third party for greater clarity.

ActionAid's approach post-tsunami has been to reach out to groups specially those 'who were considered not affected'; Further the organization sought to 'collectivise' such groups and using strong advocacy through State and National consultation bring them on the mainstream. This is indeed laudable. This could have been better channelized, if strong benchmarking supported them. Due to the fact that there appears to have been a gap between the planning level within ActionAid and the PO's implementation level in the appreciation of processes to approach the right to human security in an emergency response situation; actions on the ground lacked clear focus. The gap in general understanding among local staff and further among field partners curtailed an opportunity for strong vertical linkage. Such vertical integration could have further capitalized on ActionAid's novel approaches.

Furthermore, since shelter support has been provided to a number of beneficiaries who were not directly affected by the tsunami, initial observations raised issues of alignment of programme activities with commitments to donors. While it is a very good approach to try and improve shelter conditions of the poor and vulnerable within any window of opportunity, such allocation of funds was made with a clear view that these can be used to target non-tsunami affected and non-tsunami vulnerable families who are otherwise vulnerable. It can be debated that at the same time there are many tsunami affected families in the region who could not be assisted to the same degree. The field staff supports this decision

under the RBA way of working. ActionAid clarifies that the “DEC did define and communicate to all the agencies that they can work with all poor and excluded people in the tsunami affected districts. ActionAid’s interventions with these poor people were never at the cost of ‘directly affected people’. Moreover, the work with indirectly affected people was to take care of increasing tension/grievances leading to potential conflicts. In Sri Lanka, in some places, the support was provided to conflict affected people in the tsunami areas, but again without compromising the work with the ‘directly affected people’.” The reviewers respect this approach of ActionAid. At the same time they acknowledge the dilemma that while such decisions have to be taken by the DEC, ActionAid and involved agencies due to situational realities, it does remain a fact that the ultimate donor, the public through which DEC got its funds, did donate with a clear understanding that the funds are meant for those directly affected by the tsunami in some way or other, and our actions at times fringe on breaching this faith with which the money was donated. Would the individual who donated in response to the DEC appeal in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami agree to this reallocation?

**“Due to the RBA, we could provide houses to the poor people even though they were not affected by the tsunami”
: Field staff of Partner Organisation**

Positioning

ActionAid is a uniquely positioned organisation within the humanitarian sector. It should not try to become a mega organization driven by a flood of resources. It should also not take up the space that rightfully belongs to the local and national organisations. ActionAid will pay a great service to the humanitarian sector from its strategic ‘in-between’ position wherefrom it gets people’s voices heard, and empowers people towards achieving due rights, accessing resources, building assets and reducing risks.

Recommendation 2:

Treat technical interventions like shelter as very specialised activities, providing required technical support and ensuring at all costs that the minimum performance standards are met. Do careful balancing of participatory approaches, technical support, and leadership role.

4. Making a difference – to others and self

Implementation of the programme made a difference at various levels. The most significant impact was observed at the local level.

Impact made at national levels was limited. Learning was limited.

Striking where it matters most

The programme made a difference at many levels. ActionAid's efforts at linking local and international agendas were particularly visible in different components of the programme, particularly in Sri Lanka and India. Influencing the national level seems to have remained a challenge. In part this appears to be because of the activist role that ActionAid plays, and the activist movements that it supports, which in turn create distances with governments¹⁶.

The India programme clearly demonstrates a number of positive outcomes:

- Able to reach the most marginalized, especially women and "those who were considered not affected."
- Raised awareness on rights among people – basic idea was to collectivize people.
- Existing programmes on 'policy advocacy' got strengthened.
- Could challenge government contradictions especially on issues such as coastal zone management.
- National and state level consultations have been able to promote strong systems of accountability and transparency.
- Marginalized people being mainstreamed.

On the community front, one of the most significant differences made has been in the area of livelihoods, assets and security. The case of Nihal and Priyanthi demonstrated how ActionAid's support in building critical livelihood assets not only brought back running incomes into families but also freed them from age old debt traps. Nihal and Priyanthi struggled on less than Rs. 1000 per week but with support to purchase a water pump for their farm land, they are able to earn more than Rs. 8000 per week¹⁷. However, such evidences could not be used to sufficiently establish the breadth of this impact within the scope of this review. Livelihood initiatives, as particularly seen in the case of Sri Lanka during field visits, have been based on a participatory approach, and on assessments that were carried out prior to interventions. ActionAid's approach was mostly of restoring livelihoods and not pushing new options and agendas. This seems to have helped the cases achieve sustainability.

At the activity level, significant achievements are noticeable across the programme countries. One key area of such work has been on women's issues. The People's Report on Violence Against Women¹⁸ was based on consultations with over 7,500 women across five tsunami affected countries. The issue was examined from the level of day to day stresses right upto extreme cases of violence and exploitation, which were found to be rampant. A study done by an alliance of women's organizations in Sri Lanka on 'Violence Against women' reveals that 'most women in Sri Lanka continue to face violence, struggle to overcome its impact while being suffocated by the shock of both conflict and tsunami.'¹⁹

¹⁶ Support to one Partner Organisation had to be called off in Sri Lanka after serious concerns were raised by the government and the Partner Organisation was banned. Similarly, the national government in India disapproved the role played by ActionAid in supporting a public protest in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

¹⁷ Rebuilding Lives Together, ActionAid Sri Lanka Newsletter, issue five, January 2007.

¹⁸ Violence Against Women in the Post-Tsunami Context; People's Report – India, the Maldives, Puntland (Somalia), Sri Lanka and Thailand; published by Coastal Women's Movement, India, Care Society, the Maldives, Sri Lanka Forum for the Prevention of Violence against Women, Sri Lanka, with support from ActionAid; undated.

¹⁹ Rebuilding Lives Together, ActionAid Sri Lanka Newsletter, issue six, April 2007.

The support given to the VAW Network in Sri Lanka has visible impact on the empowerment within the women at the community level. The groups met during field visits were not very vocal, but fully aware of their rights and options available to them. This in itself is a great achievement. The Charter on VAW Post Tsunami²⁰ is a path-breaking document, and has been widely promoted by ActionAid. Of course much more needs to be done. A key staff member of ActionAid herself felt that women's rights work at the community level needs to be improved upon. Community knowledge needs to translate into local actions.

Another area of change, though again at a more local level, has been the power positions as addressed under the Rights Based Approach. The RBA has had an impact on the way of working of other NGOs also, and has definitely influenced the work of partners. The particular case of fisherfolk having to rebuild their houses away from the sea was one of concerns that was taken up and addressed, after looking at the power dynamics. ActionAid's working with the government on this kind of issues did not work so well. There was larger politics at play. Some of the other NGOs also said that people had agreed to the shifting. However, ActionAid saw that the consultation process had been very shallow. It first did information sharing and then followed it up with consultations. The People's Report on Fisheries-Based Livelihoods²¹ illustrates how producers, post harvest workers and ancillary workers were affected by the tsunami, and how their issues were taken up and addressed. A major area of concern was the tension with policies and strategies, particularly the issue of Coastal Zone Regulation.

The work with homestead land and adequate housing has been positioned very strategically within the larger programme. Through this initiative ActionAid aligned itself with affected local communities, people's movements, local organisations, INGOs and like minded civil society organizations, demanding that governments at all levels respect and protect affected communities' right to the coast, their homestead land and their livelihood and ensure that housing is adequate and culturally acceptable²². Though the issue of homestead land and housing rights is so complex that to achieve measurable impacts will take time, the very creation of movements is an achievement in itself. The people based processes, and outputs such as the People's Report²³ focusing on homestead and land rights, right to adequate housing and governance puts forward people's voices and perceptions in order to influence policy-makers in the post tsunami context. The report puts forth a comprehensive image of the existing status of housing and governance, achievements as well as limitations of government initiatives in all the four countries covered.

Another area where ActionAid made a difference was the psychosocial front, which often does not get enough attention in emergency response. The focus of ActionAid's work was not on trauma counseling. Psychosocial workers helped community groups write petitions, organize community meetings, and get back to life with a professional yet inconspicuous approach. Simple indicators like how many women sat in *dharnas* (sit-out protests) and how they engaged were used to establish the impact of psychosocial work. In Sri Lanka, where there used to be ad-hoc children's clubs earlier, the clubs took up focused exercises such as reading, writing, being together, exchange visits and field visits to address trauma in a way close to natural life.

The impact at the level of national level, primarily in the area of policy environment, was limited as seen in the evidences that this review could examine. While in the Maldives and Sri Lanka, after the People's Report processes, some of ActionAid's and its partners' staff have been invited to be part of national committees on disaster related issues, it is still unclear what difference ActionAid has been able to make at this level. In India, the national government was at some discomfort due to ActionAid's support to public protests against the government.

²⁰ The Charter reflects specific concerns of the women from South Asian countries and has been presented in various fora including the SAARC meeting held in Delhi in April 2007. The Charter covers the rights to information, food, clean water and sanitation, education and health, housing and land, livelihood, participation and decision making, protection, security and bodily integrity. The Charter evolved out of discussions with 7,315 tsunami affected women in 308 communities in India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

²¹ Fisheries-Based Livelihoods in the Post Tsunami Context; People's Report – India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand; published by GUIDE, India, Care Society, the Maldives, Kor Por Sor Mor, Thailand, National Fisheries Solidarity (NAFSO), Sri Lanka, with support from ActionAid; undated.

²² Voices from the field, Tsunami Shared Learning, issue 3, June 2007.

²³ Homestead Land and adequate Housing in the Post-Tsunami Context; People's Report - India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand; published by IRDS-DMK, India, Care Society, the Maldives, People's Planning Commission (PPC), Sri Lanka, Chomchonchai Foundation, Thailand, with support from ActionAid; undated.

Are lessons being learnt? used?

Learning emerges as a major issue for ActionAid. Is the organisation investing enough on learning? Is it able to get the benefit of the learning investments it makes?

**“You say we don’t capture enough lessons? We document so bloody much that nobody has the time to read it!”
: IECT Senior Staff**

The biggest challenge for ActionAid is institutional learning. According to IECT head Roger Yates, over a period of five years, 85 percent of the staff have left. This high staff turnover, coupled with the fact that ActionAid is a very fast growing organization, with new people joining at all times, makes the issue of learning even more important, and the consequences of not learning even more damaging.

**“We learn through invisible channels. We always send experienced staff to emergency areas to set the programmes up. That is why E-FAST is now a formal system.”
: IECT Senior Staff**

While ActionAid’s people centric staffing is very healthy and appreciated across the board (a view echoed by a number of external persons was: “They have some very good people”), ActionAid’s learning systems are felt to be lacking. The invisible channels of learning are too ad-hoc and inadequate to reach out and make a knowledge difference to the large number of new staff and Partner Organisation staff that comes on board in such situations. Not only local information gathering, but also its interpretation is needed as inputs for necessary adaptation of overall themes.

Learning processes are very weak in ActionAid at two levels:

- Team experiences do not convert into **institutional learning**. Documentation is carried out, numerous reviews are commissioned²⁴, but these merely add to the stack of reports that are read or used by very few. Some instances were cited of the Gujarat Earthquake experience having been useful during the tsunami response, but this was restricted to some key personnel who had carried this experience with them. It was cited by a senior staff member that it was not easy to access the lessons or process documents of past experiences of the organisation, such as the Orissa cyclone and Gujarat earthquake.
- Organisational knowledge and values are not handed down to the field operatives. This is particularly crucial since ActionAid consciously positions itself as a quality focused and not quantity focused organization (“We make a conscious effort to fight against an indicators and numbers based approach, and focus more on qualitative information”). Dealing in quantities requires robust systems, and dealing in quality, and that too in such a value based field as Rights, requires handing down of values and knowledge across the organization. If you want to be driven by qualitative approaches, then you need a very strong knowledge system whereby everyone in the organization holds the same values and ‘speaks the same language’. Through the key informant interviews at all levels, and the field visits, it was clearly evident that understanding of concepts such as human security and rights based approach has evolved at the top levels within the organization, and these concepts are very unclear to the field staff, and Partner Organisation field staff. ActionAid, being a value focused, fast growing, high turnover, and ideologically evolving organization, needs to invest much more in induction as well as mid-career learning of its staff and its partners. As a special outcome of the Sri Lanka and Maldives reviews, there was a clear observation that quick orientation of staff and partners is needed in the beginning to reach a common understanding.

The Knowledge Initiative of ActionAid is a very promising space within the organisation to promote learning from the organisation’s own experiences, and to feed it back to the team. However, this space is grossly underutilized. The initiative is very understaffed and ActionAid has invested very little in this critical sector. Though the conscious attempt to go for Critical Stories for Change²⁵ rather than an indicator based approach for accountability is appreciable, this effort too has remained very limited in scope. Another aspect for consideration under this initiative is that while the Knowl-

²⁴ Field personnel interviewed during the review process reported ‘review fatigue’. The material made available for the current review included a large number of previous internal and external review reports and other documents, but nowhere in the documents or in any of the key informant interviews could a consolidation and synthesis of these be found.

²⁵ As part of the Knowledge Initiative

edge Initiative attempts to be rigorous in this approach, rigor can sometime defeat the learning objective, especially when trying to target a wider audience who has limited time to read and absorb learning material. In addition to the stories, simpler and quicker modules that synthesise the learning and can be appealing in simplicity for the busy reader are also needed. With particular reference to the Tsunami Programme, the Knowledge Initiative could have done much more for documenting and analyzing experiences, drawing lessons, and disseminating the findings.

Recommendation 3:

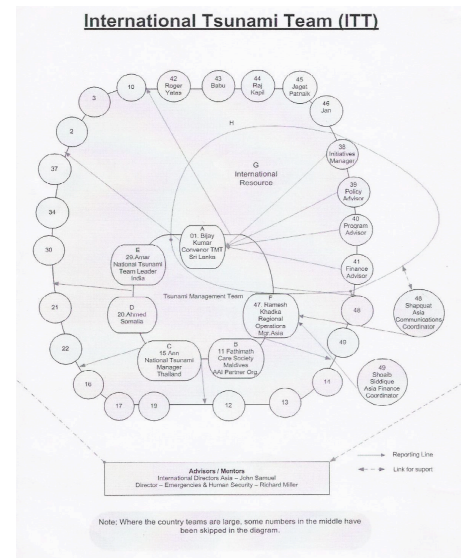
Capture the lessons and strengthen institutional learning. Establish a link between reporting, documentation, knowledge accumulation, and learning processes. Develop and establish a formal induction process for new staff and partners, wherein basics of the organisation's rights based ideology, operational framework and work processes are passed on and absorbed.

5. Systems – the backbone support

Systems for programming, management and accountability were effective, but evolved for a large part of the programme, with a lot of balancing needed all through

Evolving, changing, but too complex? changing too fast?

The Tsunami Programme covered six countries, of which ActionAid was already working in three. The management system itself started with an International Coordination Team, which was replaced a year later by a Tsunami Management Team. While the approach of 'matrix of accountability' is very sound in principle and has been approached and put in place well by ActionAid, the Tsunami Programme management process itself has two sides to it. On one hand it has demonstrated an openness and willingness on part of ActionAid to change with situations and to evolve its management systems to be more inclusive (the Tsunami Management Team had as members country programme representatives and country directors as against the more top loaded and thematic constitution of the earlier International Coordination Team). At the same time, on the other hand it has created a dynamic and complex system that was found to be not clearly understood by staff and partners alike.



ActionAid's position on this issue is that "the most simple form of decision-making is hierarchical and linear, whereas participatory decision-making and a matrix structure is more necessarily complex". Josantony Joseph has also covered this in the review of the tsunami programme's multi-country management structure. The authors, while agreeing to this in principle, felt that matrix management system could have been made more efficient by keeping it simpler in terms of multiplicity of functional roles of certain key positions, and more importantly, by having it more clearly communicated to all concerned, particularly the middle and field level staff. The grey area that the reviewers would like to point out is the clarity on communication lines for information sharing and decision-making. The matrix management system seems to work better at the higher international levels, for setting agendas, but suffers a certain gap at the country programme level, and appears to operationally turn into a linear system as it nears the field level. The major concern that the reviewers have is regarding the uniformity of understanding of the system at the various levels within it. The second concern is regarding the ability of all levels to keep pace with changes. The tsunami programme, being of such large scale, rapid progression, and in less known territories in some countries, could have benefited from a management system that was easier to understand or better communicated at the level of field staff and partner organisations.

On a similar note, the organizational and programmatic evolution of ActionAid itself has followed a steady growth trend from the early nineties. However, around the year 2004, the same time as the Tsunami Programme took shape, the overall programme portfolio of ActionAid starting bursting into a very high and diverse growth path. This was observed and concerns raised by senior staff of ActionAid at their meeting²⁶. The review discussion also covered the E-FAST initiative, a protocol for rapid deployment of senior staff in emergency situations, and establishment of the Oversight Group as initiatives put in place to keep pace with the rising management demands, but it appears that the initiatives still need to mature into a systems approach. In 2006, ActionAid developed an Emergency Alert, Review & Response Mechanism (EARARM)²⁷. The purpose of EARARM is to enhance the readiness of country programmes to respond to emergencies in a timely and effective manner by proactively analyzing the predictable aspects of the most common disasters. While the principle of managing through such systems is sound, the sheer magnitude of ActionAid's operations, in combination with its rights based and qualitative approach, and fast growing and changing organizational

²⁶ IECT Annual Meeting at Brighton, UK, participatory session on looking back, 30 October 2007

²⁷ Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies; Annual Report 2006

size and shape, raise the need for these to be made much more sound and strongly applied in order to cater to the management needs.

**“The biggest challenge is – how do we take what we have learnt, and use it to influence the agency and our way of working, besides the future programmes”
: ActionAid senior staff**

Dilemmas in being accountable to beneficiaries

ActionAid consciously aims to be accountable to its beneficiaries. It has been found across the ActionAid teams, partners, and external stakeholders, that the Rights Based Approach taken by ActionAid has been received very well and has helped the organization create a very clear niche for itself within the humanitarian aid sector. Conscious programming based on accountability principles is well demonstrated in projects across the Tsunami countries. However, the approach also throws up a number of conflicts and dilemmas within ActionAid’s work:

1. Ethical dilemmas facing ActionAid staff in emergency situations²⁸: Having an organization-wide emergencies’ strategy is important, but applying that strategy is another matter. Emergency situations can present ActionAid staff with seemingly impossible decisions and few easy answers, as some of the following dilemmas illustrate:

- Will the provision of free handouts in an emergency situation undermine long-term strategies to promote communities’ self reliance?
- Where there is a finite amount of emergency assistance, difficult dilemmas will arise over who needs this assistance the most.

2. Rights based accountability vs. financial accountability: ActionAid’s accountability processes are widely appreciated, and previous reviews including the independent evaluation of DEC talk very highly about the accountability processes of ActionAid across. The current review also found the accountability approach and processes in the Tsunami Programme to be laudable. At the same time, it was also observed that rights based work is very labour intensive, but low on financial demands. The work ActionAid has done with its Partner Organisation MONLAR²⁹ in Sri Lanka has been truly rights based in the manner envisioned by ActionAid’s strategy document. However, when viewed as a part of the entire country programme, its scale in terms of money spent is miniscule. Similarly the public hearings organized by the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) in Tamil Nadu, India were very effective in bringing critical issues out in the open, and were very visible accountability processes, and yet a low cost intervention. In contrast, the most visible sized projects from the ‘accountability to donor’ point of view have been the ones that have given out financial grants to beneficiaries and constructed buildings. Such programmes appear to be closer to relief efforts, and rights justifications behind them are relatively weak. It might benefit ActionAid’s accountability principle to distinguish rights based work from relief work, and to give them appropriate emphasis within their own domains.

**“We wanted downward accountability, one without timelines and aimed at beneficiaries. However, money comes with demands for upward accountability, with strict timelines. Donors pressure for reports by their deadlines.”
: IEC T senior staff**

**“Upward accountability is undermining downward accountability”
: IECT senior staff**

**“We didn’t put enough resources in basic flow of information on accountability”
: IECT senior staff**

²⁸ The rights-based approach to emergencies: A Beginners’ Guide; ActionAid

²⁹ MONLAR (Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform) is movement initiated by activists associated with All Lanka Peasant Congress, one of the oldest peasant movements in the country. ActionAid supported MONLAR for its programme on People’s Planning Commission on Recovery after Tsunami, in partnership with a number of organisations. MONLAR is seen as ‘an unsophisticated network of activists with strong beliefs and ability to push agendas’.

3. Programmes vs. finance: The issue of integration of programme and finance teams under an organization is a universal one, and also emerged as an observation in the Tsunami Programme.

**“We need to be slick and efficient, without being command and control driven”
: IECT senior staff**

The ‘command and control’ of the finance people was resented by programme staff of ActionAid, and more importantly, partners. This command and control was only a handing on of what ActionAid received from its backdonor. There were specific instances cited, such as the delay of five months in the processing and placement of a strategic senior staff member after he had been identified for recruitment for Somalia, due to vagueness in HR and finance policies. However, close understanding and cooperation was reported among finance and programme staff in one national office visited, highlighting the need for closer interpersonal relationship building between finance and programmes.

**“Relationship between finance and programmes is still based on individuals and not systems”
: IECT senior staff dealing with finance**

**“Finance, HR and programme thinking needs to be better integrated”
: IECT senior staff**

**“Finance needs to give enough information for programme people, and programme needs to have a better sense of the budget”
: IECT senior staff**

**“It is a big mistake to take up such a huge programme with only one backdonor”
: ActionAid country programme staff**

It is one of ActionAid’s main priorities to be transparent and openly accountable to all of its stakeholders: the public, funders, partners, and perhaps most importantly, the poor people with whom the organisation works, which is very well captured in ActionAid’s Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS)³⁰. In time, the hope is that this system will allow more creative and honest assessment of change and create space for staff to listen to and engage with the concerns of poor people. More critically, the approach puts poor people at the centre stage in learning, analysing and responding to their own situation. ALPS was seen in action in the Tsunami Programme field areas, but again, there is a gap between the ALPS concept as evolved at the organization’s top levels, and as it is practiced on the ground. While the concept itself is clear and laudable, its application at community level is a very complex issue. Budget charts are put on display at community facilities supported by the programme, and discussed in meetings, but it seems that this still remains a mechanical exercise not going fully into an engagement process. Moreover, accountability to beneficiaries is not easily achievable merely by sharing budgets. In fact, there have been instances where this has led to difficult situations with conflicting vested interests in the community making the shared information the basis for creating trouble. ActionAid will need to do more thinking and develop approaches for the ground level application of ALPS.

Recommendation 4:

Bring programmes and systems, particularly financial systems, closer, and link programmatic accountability with financial accountability.

³⁰ ALPS lays out a framework for involving communities and Partner Organisations closely in all aspects of our programme work, including: planning; budgeting; monitoring and reviewing. ALPS also requires ActionAid to carry out an independent review of its work at all levels every 3-5 years. A key feature of ALPS is the Participatory Review and Reflection Processes (PRRPs).

6. Programming processes

ActionAid's programming process is based at the people's level in principle. 'To start from where the people are' is the key to the process. ActionAid's value placement and wide ranging objectives create some dilemmas.

People at the centre

The openness in ActionAid's programming system to allow programming basics to arise from the ground up is creditable. The Tsunami Programme has many components that are outside the conventional scope of such post disaster programmes, and it is evident that these have arisen from the locally felt needs that have played an important role in determining programme design. The example of work done with women's groups on curbing alcoholism in fisher communities is a case that demonstrates this approach and its effectiveness. Consumption of alcohol shot up among the men-folk in the aftermath of the tsunami, partly due to the fact that they were out of work and sitting idle, and partly because there was trauma, and immediate availability of compensation money. Due to this phenomena, there was a sudden spurt in cases of domestic violence targeting women. The VAW network actively pursued this agenda, and there are many stories of change that came out of this action.

With this same principle, Partner Organisations also enjoyed a position of substantial influence in the programming process, and the partners largely drove needs assessments, planning consultations, proposal writing and mid-course adjustments. While a price had to be paid for this approach in terms of gaps due to lack of experience of Partner Organisations, and newness of their relationship between ActionAid, the overall spirit of working was in line with ActionAid's strategic goals, and was sound in approach.

Is the Government a Partner Organisation or an adversary?

Partnering with the government has been a tricky issue, though the Rights Based Approach also implies that as the ultimate custodian of rights, the state needs to be made a Partner Organisation in the long term process. Yet, in order to ensure immediate attention to rights issues, ActionAid has supported activist movements and has itself taken an activist stance in a number of situations across the Tsunami Programme.

"We don't take an activist role. We educate the communities about the denial of their rights, and then if they want to stand up and make themselves heard, we support that."

: IECT Senior Staff

"It is important to take an activist stand if we are to pursue the rights based approach."

: Senior country staff

"We need support and recognize the government's role. We need to be part of the system"

: IECT senior staff

"First reach out to the government; don't go alone. Never mind the rights based approach."

: ActionAid country programme staff

"They blow hot and cold"

: Senior staff of external NGO

There is a uniformly consistent stand within ActionAid regarding its position as an organization taking the rights based approach. The various examples of work, particularly in India and Sri Lanka, that have challenged the existing situations and have helped communities demand fulfillment of their legal rights are commendable.

A clear gap that exists is in the communication of this approach. Many outside the organization, including friendly staff of other NGOs, government officials and the media see the ActionAid's actions in a purist activism light, and this creates an impression of i) ActionAid being an anti-government activist organization, and ii) inconsistent in its approach, sometimes working quietly with communities and governments, and at other times taking to the streets and triggering public protests that even run the risk of getting violent. The organisation's logic and reasoning behind its way of working is not communicated well.

Within ActionAid too there is a range of views on the activism role, the most balanced one being that the organization should take the approach of using PVA kind of tools to inform people of their vulnerabilities and rights and let people take a stand for themselves.

"People should be given space; we should not take their space. ActionAid should negotiate with the government, provide information and skills to people, and create linkages. The confusion occurs when we come to the forefront and we displace the local organizations and communities. We then do more harm, and we have done so in the past."
: ActionAid senior country staff

"We tend to projectise things. Social movements are not projects. Having said this, social movements also need projects."
: External NGO representative at IECT Annual Meeting

While such conflicts and balancing acts will be inevitable in the rights based way of working. ActionAid needs to be cautious that where the state is very strong, it is tempting to fall into a role of criticising without engagement³¹.

Linking relief, rehabilitation (and risk reduction?)

Disaster Risk Reduction is a stated area of integrated work within all DEC supported Tsunami programmes. ActionAid has taken up DRR as an international priority work area, with its leading programme being the multi country programme on school safety. However, incorporating DRR in a massive relief operation is not an easy task.

"DRR is there as an overall strategy. However, in reality we didn't find space until well into the second year."
: IECT senior staff

ActionAid needs to specifically review its DRR approach within humanitarian assistance work. In case the organization takes a conscious stand that it cannot incorporate DRR in the immediate relief phases then let this be made clear and DRR be taken as a linked but separate area of work. However, if the organization decides to keep DRR as an integral part of its disaster response work right from the beginning, then much homework will need to be done in advance to make this possible. The people's report on DRR³² shows three ways in which the DRR is being viewed:

- Following the priorities of action as listed in the Hyogo Framework for Action
- Through a rights lens, holding governments accountable for the lack of safety
- With a community based approach, advocating local capacities and local action

While all of these may be relevant, it is the community based approach that actually holds greatest potential, particularly in developing nations and poorer societies within these nations. The Hyogo Framework for Action also clearly acknowledges this fact. The good practices highlighted in the people's report, such as the school safety and mangrove plantation initiatives in Thailand, the Thailand DRR Alliance, and the PVA approach taken in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands of

³¹ Independent Evaluation of the DEC Tsunami Crisis Response; Final Report; November 2005

³² Disaster Risk Reduction in the post-tsunami context: People's Report; India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand; published jointly by Solidarity for Asserting Rights of Coastal Community, India, Care Society, the Maldives, The Green Movement of Sri Lanka, Coordination Centre for Ban Namken Community and The Mirror Foundation, Thailand, and supported by ActionAid; undated.

India, all demonstrate the viability and impact of such initiatives. The only major issue to address remains the timing and feasibility of integrating DRR early in post disaster work.

Recommendation 5:

Continue and nurture people centric programming, but with greater investments in partnerships, constructive engagement with governments, and incorporation of DRR as a developmental agenda.

7. Channels of delivery

ActionAid and its Partner Organisations created a unique bridge for people to access their rights, as ever locked up behind legal, social, economic and physical barriers. ActionAid had the right people, but could do with more clearly defined pathways for them.

A bunch of good people

ActionAid is, and is viewed from the outside as, an organization based on principles and steered by a group of very able, dedicated and knowledgeable individuals. There is a high level of autonomy given to teams, country programmes, and individual duty bearers in the organisation's way of working. This is very evident in the attitude of the staff at national and field levels. Passion and motivation drive the team.

"They have some really good people"
: External NGO staff

On the flip side, autonomy has brought with it an element of ad-hoc decision making based on local contexts and team perceptions, which is very strongly viewed as an 'inconsistency' in the way the organization works. Decisions to get engaged in some emergencies and not in others came up in a big way in internal discussions and in conversations with external stakeholders. ActionAid staff itself is often in a dilemma due to this way of working, and some find that the decentralization based powers vested in the country directors' offices are too loose for the organization to remain a consistent performer. The cases of Democratic Republic of Congo and South Asian Floods were prominently discussed.

"ActionAid is like a loosely bound federation of regional chieftains":
: Former ActionAid senior staff and board member

Recommendation 6:

Continue and strengthen person centric team building, though with systems for greater consistency in decision-making and greater accountability for country programmes.

The right Partner Organisation

ActionAid entered Sri Lanka after the tsunami, and had to start the hunt for partners from scratch. The quality of local NGOs was weaker than many other places where ActionAid had been working earlier. There was a major problem of finding sustainable partners. All partners were new. Many of them were could not easily take on the rights based approach. Some were uncomfortable with it. Some partnerships had to be closed. Others were overwhelmed by the sudden growth in their scale of work and funding. One particular Partner Organisation in East Sri Lanka experienced a hundred-fold increase in its annual budget. Even finding suitable local staff was a problem in the beginning. People were recruited from all over. The induction and learning/orientation programme was ad-hoc and weak. The conflict situation made things much worse.

"We need to identify probable work areas and build relationships before something happens"
: ActionAid country programme staff

"We need to improve our process of choosing partners. We need to spend some time and get introduced first. A stronger partnership protocol is needed."
: ActionAid country programme staff

The ActionAid-Care Society partnership in Maldives was also formed after the Tsunami. The nascent nature of this partnership acted as a barrier for transfer of ActionAid's approach and strategic objectives to the Partner Organisation in the initial stages of the programme. The effect on the ground was likewise. While the Partner Organisation was involved in the decision making process, lack of adequate 'Partner Organisation-induction' process created some misunderstanding and biased views. For example:

- As per the local Partner Organisation – “community participation created expectation among people”; also
- The Partner Organisation felt that “resources to the organization are being halted abruptly in 2007 December.”

All this would have been known to the Partner Organisation, however it appears that the overall perspective was unclear.

Implementation problems were also felt by the Partner Organisation as they were:

- Unable to manage large scale operations
- Human resources were lacking both in terms of numbers and sensitivity to issues
- While the Partner Organisation was given exposure to general concepts such as “human security”; there was very little input on how to translate such concepts on the ground.

While many of the problems discussed were part of a teething process in a new relationship, the after-effects are still visible and it appears that the programme would have benefited immensely and all through from a stronger partnership building process.

In India, ActionAid had existing partnerships in place in Tamil Nadu before the Tsunami, and these helped in making the programme processes much smoother as compared to the other places visited.

Working through Partner Organisations makes ActionAid vulnerable to difficult situations that arise specially in case of new partnerships and new countries. There are a large number of variables that influence the effectiveness of partnership based programmes, such as convergence of ideologies, management systems, understanding of concepts, and ability to contextualise to local situation. ActionAid's selection of Partner Organisations should be based on the link between 'human security' and the issues local groups are engaged in; and not just on their geographical presence and related capacities. While the 'informality' in the partnership did create opportunity for positive synergies, it was not backed by a well laid out implementation plan. Thus activities did not align well with the ActionAid's strategic goals.

The case of the Maldives illustrates these complexities well. Maldives has an emerging problem of high GDP of the country but the benefits not reaching the people. This is widening the gap between rich and poor leading to disillusionment. The civil society movement in the country is still in its infancy. The Government does not encourage growth of civil society organizations. At the same time there are government appointed and controlled 'community based organizations' in each island. ActionAid partnered with Care Society for all of its work in the Maldives. Care Society further partnered with island based CBOs for implementation of the work. Before the Tsunami, ActionAid did not have any partnership with Care Society. Due to this reason, the initial damage and needs assessment was done by a Bangladeshi agency. The new relationship, absence of joint assessments, chain of partnerships for local implementation, and the fact that ActionAid was new to the country itself, all went in to make the management of this partnership a challenging task for both ActionAid and Care Society.

However, in spite of many complex issues in the Maldives, ActionAid-Care Society partnership had some very positive spin-offs:

- For the first time civil society organizations in the country could organize a meeting in Male –

“We could produce a collection of voices of people”

“Island Chiefs became more accountable”

“People are empowered”

: Partner Organisation staff

- The partnership provided “good exposure to civil society”. At the same time, even “community representatives could be exposed”.

- As a result of the exposure and training provided by ActionAid, Care Society now has trained local people which can do assessments in case of disasters in future.

Recommendation 7:

Develop and put in place a stronger partnership protocol.

Annexes

Annex I: Tsunami Evaluation Specific Extracts from Terms of Reference

Purpose and scope of the review

The review is primarily about **looking forwards**. It offers an opportunity:

- *To check if our thinking and the assumptions underpinning the strategy (and the way it is implemented) are valid and relevant.* For example, this was the first time that conflict & emergencies came under one strategy, what has been learnt what might need to change based on lessons and new areas of work emerging.
- *To take stock of our work to date.* To draw out the key issues and lessons from our work and from the wider sector that will help to improve our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our approaches, systems and structures and provide recommendations for future work and on how to improve performance. To provide a stronger rationale as to how we spend our money and whether the model is the right one. This is also about understanding how ActionAid apply a rights approach in its emergency and conflict work and to what extent our practice matches our rhetoric.
- ♦ *To assess, how our strategy 'sits' within the wider emergencies and conflict sector and within ActionAid.* To look at how the strategy is perceived both by external actors (including poor and excluded, donors, partners, peers, governments and ActionAid supporters) and internally, within ActionAid (including country programmes, themes, international directors, trustees and IEC team members).
- ♦ *To provide an overall analysis of the current processes and approaches for monitoring progress and learning* about our human security work, and generate ideas on how we might do this more systematically in the future.
- ♦ *To check on and deepen our accountability.* ActionAid's Accountability Learning and Planning system's (ALPS) commitment to learning, and involvement of stakeholders especially poor and excluded groups in all aspects of its work (including monitoring progress) has presented a number of challenges on how to effectively engage stakeholders in a meaningful process to ensure that we are sufficiently challenged from outside the organisation to critically examine and be accountable for our work. There are also external pressures that require ActionAid to critically look at its accountability processes to poor and excluded people partners and allies, including the recent HAP initiative. Whilst ActionAid has often been cited as ahead of the game with regards to accountability, we need to examine more closely what we have been doing, and what lessons can be learnt for the future and for the sector.

The lessons from the review should help to us to see whether our strategy is still relevant and help inform our future work.

The review should look at ActionAid's Human Security thematic work as a whole at local, national and international level and how the sum of the parts add up, and how work at national level links into international. The emphasis of the review should be at the country level (community, partners and national level). It is important that review looks at accountability processes to poor and excluded people and partners and allies. This includes an understanding of different roles and behaviours, culture, power relations and conflict. Issues of gender and women's rights should be a key component of this review.

The components of the review

The review will build on the components outlined in the table.

- ♦ Each stream of work will be allocated to a different team. Separate TORs are issued to further define evaluation and review questions.
- ♦ The streams of work are phased so that they can build on each other. The evaluation of the tsunami response and the evaluation of the South Asia Earthquake response will need to feed into the review of "how does Human Security fit in the broader humanitarian context"
- ♦ The findings from external consultants will be validated and discussed within ActionAid through peer reviewing processes. These include 1) a workshop of the International Emergency and Conflict Team; 2) consultation with other peers in ActionAid (staff working in Emergencies, Country Directors of countries working on Human Security, other theme heads).

1. Evaluation of tsunami response		
Timeframe: Approx 30 days (from August to November) * An interim report should be completed by 1 st October 2007. * A presentation for peer review should be completed by November 2007 (TBC)	Undertaken by: External consultant (to be appointed)	Key questions 1. Whether the assumptions underlying our programming are valid and whether the approaches are appropriate within ActionAid's overall strategy, Rights to End Poverty. 2. Whether our implementation of these approaches made the difference we intended at all levels (local, national, international). 3. The effectiveness of our systems for programming, management, accountability and learning. Specific questions for the review are in Appendix 1.

Methodology

ActionAid does not demand consultants to followed a pre-set methodology, but calls consultants and team to propose their own approach. The chosen consultants will be asked to work closely with an internal reference group for the review when preparing a detailed guidance document, including areas of investigations, key questions to be addressed and an outline of the processes and proposed methodologies.

ActionAid will offer logistical support in organizing field visits to AAI offices and programmes.

We will favour approaches which:

- are light and where possible build on existing ActionAid processes, reviews, learnings (e.g. available strategies, plans, reviews, reports) as well as other existing external sources.
- seek to consult with key stakeholders, both external and internal to ActionAid, remembering that ActionAid places first and foremost accountability and participation from poor and excluded, in particular women and girls.
- will ensure a variety of perspectives (e.g. from different geographic areas, from local to global)
- will ensure that the different review strands are sufficiently linked

We are favouring a non-sector component/perspective for any bid (i.e. people from outside the development, emergency response and conflict communities).

Outputs

Each component of the review will need to result in a report no longer than 25 pages with a 3-5 page summary.

In addition to this, consultants and teams responsible for each component of the review should set up a presentation of the process and findings of maximum 20 minutes, possibly accompanied by audio / visual (e.g. powerpoint, videos). Such presentation will be the main tool used to inform participants to the peer reviewing process.

The report will be a lasting document which will include insights and reflections in addition to key lessons and recommendations. The report should also include the reflections and voices of stakeholders involved in the review process, both positive and negative in direct quotes.³³

We will give preference to consultants and teams who will propose, in addition to the report, innovative and effective ways to capture the process and the results of the review, and to create outputs which can be more effectively shared and presented to our audiences.

Management of the review

The International Director for the Human Security theme is responsible for commissioning the review.

The review will be project managed by the European Impact Assessment advisor, who is responsible for supporting the Human Security theme. They will be responsible for:

- finding and managing the consultants, including briefing and providing initial contacts to country programmes, IECT team members, conflict network members etc.
- liaising with the internal reference group
- assisting the consultant in accessing relevant information/documentation and contacts.

³³ Whilst ensuring confidentiality

- ♦ overseeing the budget for the review

An internal reference group will be established which will include the IECT Management team, ActionAid's Head of Impact Assessment and an adviser.

1. Useful documents

Rights to End Poverty ActionAid International Strategy

Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageID=6>

Human Security Strategic Plan 2005-2010

Available from: emergencies@actionaid.org

Human Security Annual Review 2006

Available from: emergencies@actionaid.org

ActionAid Emergencies and Conflict website

Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageID=23>

ActionAid's Accountability, Learning and Planning System

Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/main.aspx?PageId=261>

Specific questions for the Evaluation of the overall tsunami response As a component of the thematic review of Human Security

The evaluation of the Tsunami programme shall build on the large number of review and reflections on the programme already conducted (see section on "Further Documentation"). It is intended as an end of programme evaluation of the Tsunami intervention and, as such it will also be shared with the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC). The evaluation of the tsunami programme is also a key component of a thematic review of Human Security in Conflict and Emergencies. In particular, its finding shall also feed into the review of "How does Human security work fit into the broader humanitarian context?"

This appendix focuses on specific questions for the review. Please refer to the overall TORs for the overarching questions and context of the review.

Context

The ActionAid response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami was the biggest multi-country programme that we had ever implemented. This single project made up about 12% of ActionAid's entire programme expenditure for three consecutive years. It took place in 6 countries. This included 3 countries (India, Thailand, Somaliland) where ActionAid already had an active presence and 3 countries (Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Maldives) where ActionAid had not worked before. The scale and scope of the programme, and the speed at which it was launched tested our systems and capacity to the limits, and so generated innovative solutions to new challenges.

The programme has been frequently reviewed with a range of processes. These reviews have examined the impact of each components of the programme on the ground. This evaluation is to build on these reviews and draw out the lessons from the programme as a whole. From these reviews we know about the strengths and weaknesses of the field programme and the impact against its objectives in each area and at different times.

Key questions

The purpose of the evaluation is for us to learn from the experience of the programming and delivery and so improve future emergency work.

The evaluation will report on:

1. Whether the assumptions underlying our programming are valid and so whether the approaches are appropriate within ActionAid's overall strategy, Rights to End Poverty.
2. Whether our implementation of these approaches made the difference we intended at all levels (Local, national, international).
3. The effectiveness of our systems for programming, management, accountability and learning.

Question 1 and 2 will require reporting on the validity of the assumptions and approaches of ActionAid, and of the suitability, relevance, effectiveness and impact of the intervention undertaken (with particular attention also to our policy work).

To this end, the evaluation will need:

- a) to draw on the reports of reviews and audits, to produce a meta-narrative of programme impact over time.
- b) to seek evidence of impact of the policy work nationally and internationally.

As for question 3, the following specific questions apply

Specific questions

a. Programming

Were our programme processes consistent with ALPS, (ActionAid's accountability, learning and planning system)? Look in particular at:

Programme design processes:

- ♦ Were the assessments timely and appropriate?
- ♦ How did assessments represent poor peoples views?
- ♦ Were our programme objectives consistent with the assessment findings?
- ♦ How was the programme design (for both field work and policy work) informed by the assessments, coordination with others, and considerations of cost effectiveness?
- ♦ How was the policy programme design?

Monitoring, reviewing and learning processes

- ♦ Was the whole system of internal and external reviews appropriate and cost effective (in helping us see what we were actually doing compared to what we thought we were doing)?
- ♦ How did monitoring and reviewing represent poor peoples views?
- ♦ What were the specific advantages and challenges of each component of the system?
- ♦ Did the reviews actually lead to effective changes and adjustments of the programme?

Accountability processes

- ♦ How effective are the social audit, community review and community-based change plan processes in allowing poor people to hold us to account?
- ♦ How did we manage the concurrent processes of reporting to ActionAid and to other donors (especially the DEC)? How did these processes affect our partners and how did we help them overcome the challenges of reporting?
- ♦ Do our accountability mechanisms effectively engage stakeholders in a meaningful process to ensure that we are sufficiently challenged from outside the organisation to critically examine and be accountable for our work? How do our mechanisms for learning and accountability sits vis-à-vis other initiatives to improve quality and performance of the humanitarian work (e.g. Red Cross Code of Conduct, Sphere Standards, HAP-I)

b. Delivery

Did we cope adequately with the challenges posed; how did we overcome the challenges; and what can we learn to improve future performance in the following aspects of programme delivery?

Functions

- ♦ Having sufficient Human Resources and adequate HR systems in place
- ♦ developing sufficient capacity to deliver the programme (both ActionAid staff, partners and community).
- ♦ Having adequate financial systems in place
- ♦ working with partners we had not worked with before (in terms of appraisals, inductions, reviews..).
- ♦ Having vastly increased media profile and communications demands
- ♦ Raising such a large amount of money and leaving official donor funds alone

Multi-country management

- ♦ Establishing a new management system after the 2006 management review.
- ♦ Managing in a matrix of geography (line management through the Asia Regional Office, despite Somaliland's inclusion) and theme (accountability for programme quality to the human security theme).
- ♦ Managing the impact of a massive emergency programme on existing country programmes (India, Thailand, Somaliland).
- ♦ Starting work in new countries (Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Maldives)
- ♦ Involving a Partner Organisation (Care Society from Maldives) in the ActionAid management structure (Tsunami Management Team).
- ♦ Drawing on the institutional capacity of the organization (IECT, functions, staff)

Coordination

- ♦ Were the efforts to coordinate with other stakeholders sufficient and effective?

- ♦ Were there common needs identification processes / convergence with the analysis of other stakeholders? Were there efforts to reach agreement with other stakeholders regarding what needed to be done and who would do what (as compared to doing what we wanted to do, regardless of plans and efforts of other stakeholders)?
- ♦ Were there efforts to achieve coordination at the community level or only at the agency level? What 'say' do people have? Were there efforts to achieve community-led coordination?
- ♦ Was there effective collaboration in policy work – in sharing and engaging with policy makers – at community, national, international level, both within the ActionAid programme, across organizations on the tsunami, and across different themes of ActionAid work?

Methodology

The overall methodological approach has been described in the broader TORs.

In principle the review is expected to consist of:

- ♦ Analysis of key documents / reports
- ♦ Telephone / face to face interviews / conversations (with key ActionAid staff, Partner Organisations, other NGOs, alliances, government officials, key institutions etc).
- ♦ A visit to field sites in a selection of ActionAid country programmes and individual and group discussions with key stakeholders (in particular, poor and excluded groups).

The review will feed into peer review / sharing of findings November. It is expected that findings of the review will be packaged in a suitable way to feed into that process. We will also consider the participation of the reviewer to the peer review as an option.

Further documentation available on request from ActionAid

- ♦ Tsunami Disaster Response Strategy
- ♦ Tsunami Disaster Response Proposal
- ♦ Tsunami Disaster Response Reports 1 and 2
- ♦ Tsunami Extended Response Programme
- ♦ Tsunami Programme External Evaluation January 2006
- ♦ February 2006 – country PRRP
- ♦ August 2006 – country PRRPs (Maldives, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka) + consolidated international review (which was based on the country review documents)
- ♦ February 2007 – country PRRPs (Maldives, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka) + consolidated international review (as above)
- ♦ July / August 2007 country PRRPs (4 countries as above) + we plan to review our 4 focus areas (only a desk review of DRR, VAW, Homestead land and livelihoods)

Annex II: Key informants interviewed and visits conducted

Informants interviewed

Amar Jyoti Nayak, Head Tsunami Response Team, India
Bijay Kumar, Country Director, Sri Lanka
Fathimath Afiya, Executive Director, CARE Society, Maldives
Harjeet Singh, Emergencies Policy Analyst, India
Hasantha Gunaweera, Head of Organisational Effectiveness, Sri Lanka
Ijazulla Ali, CARE Society, Maldives
Kate Carroll, Knowledge Initiative Coordinator, UK
Katriona Street, Finance (Human Security)
Khemraj Upadhyaya, Advisor to Team Leader, Sri Lanka (and Focal Person for Maldives)
Louise McLean, Team Business Manager, IECT, UK
Niaz Murtaza, International Programme Manager, Sri Lanka
P.B. Sajeev, Head of Tsunami Response Team in Tamil Nadu, India
P. V. Unnikrishnan, Emergencies and Conflict Advisor (Asia), India
Ravi Pratap Singh, International Tsunami Programme Advisor, Sri Lanka
Richard Miller, ActionAid UK Director and International Director of Human Security
Roger Yates, Head of Emergencies and Conflict, UK
Sandhya Weerasinghe, Policy Coordinator, Sri Lanka
Silva Ferretti, Review Project Manager
Swairee Rupasinghe, Manager - National Partnerships, Sri Lanka
Tony Durham, ActionAid UK Media Officer for Emergencies
Staff of PRDA (People's Rural Development Agency), Sri Lanka
Staff of Siyath, Sri Lanka
Staff of CARE Society, Maldives
Informal discussions with former ActionAid staff, Christian Aid staff, Government of India officials
Informal discussions with faculty from University of Madras (India) and Peradanya University (Sri Lanka)

Visits conducted

UK (IECT Meeting at Brighton): 29 October to 02 November 2007
Maldives: 20 to 25 November 2007
India: 4-9 December 2007
Sri Lanka: 9 to 13 December 2007

Annex III: Lead questions for Key Informant Interviews

1. Did we make the impact we wanted to make? What do our beneficiaries think?
2. Was our programming based on the right assumptions and knowledge?
3. How did the tsunami programme relate to ActionAid's overall strategy, Rights to End Poverty?
4. What were the major successes at different levels (local, national, international)?
5. What were the major challenges at these levels? Did ActionAid engage with other actors on the ground for addressing challenges?
6. Were the systems for programming, management and accountability effective? Things you would do differently the next time?
7. Will our work have a long-term impact? Does it relate to future risks?
8. How does ActionAid look at governance? Do we work with governments or around them? Do we work against them if needed?
9. Is ActionAid learning lessons from its experiences? Will these stay with the organization for the next time? Is ActionAid sharing them with others?
10. How would you define ActionAid's Human Security approach? Do you feel that this understanding is consistent across London staff, national staff and partners' field staff?