Introduction

This is an initial report from the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC). The TEC is a collaborative effort by aid agencies (donor governments’ aid departments, United Nations agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements) to improve humanitarian systems by learning from the response to the earthquake and tsunami of 26 December 2004. Another aim of the TEC is to provide some accountability for the humanitarian system to both the giving and receiving publics.

The TEC carried out five joint thematic evaluations: on the donor response, co-ordination, needs assessment, the impact on local and national capacities, and the linkage of relief with rehabilitation and long-term development. The added value that the TEC joint evaluations bring is the ability to do sectoral assessments which would be difficult for individual actors to do. It was also hoped that the joint TEC evaluations would reduce the need for individual agency evaluations.

It was originally planned that this report would present the preliminary findings of the TEC thematic evaluations; however, the thematic reports have fallen behind their planned timetables. The preliminary findings presented here are based on a variety of sources, including some of the draft TEC evaluation reports, TEC workshops in London and Brussels, and comments by evaluation team leaders, evaluation managers, and members of the TEC’s Core Management Group.

The main reports on the work of the TEC will be the five thematic evaluations and the TEC synthesis report, due to be published in June/July 2006. The TEC synthesis report will draw together all the themes as a coherent whole and make recommendations for the future. Given that this report draws on sources other than the incomplete TEC thematic reports, it may present a different range of issues from the synthesis report.
The impact of the earthquake and tsunamis

The fourth largest earthquake of recent times struck about 100km off the west coast of Sumatra, an hour and a half after dawn on 26 December 2004. A 1,200km section of the earth’s crust shifted beneath the Indian Ocean and the earthquake released stored energy equivalent to over 21,000 Hiroshima bombs. This raised the seafloor several metres and sent a train of giant waves (tsunamis) rushing east and west to versak havoc on the coasts of more than a dozen countries spread over two continents.

Tsunamis waves started to strike the Nicobar and Andaman Islands within ten minutes of the earthquake, and Banda Aceh was struck within another ten minutes or so. Within two hours of the earthquake, both Thailand and Sri Lanka had been hit. The east coast of India was hit shortly afterwards.

Tsunamis rolled over the Maldives three hours after the earthquake and lashed the Somali coast more than seven hours after the earthquake. The earthquake and tsunami killed people in fourteen countries across two continents, with the last two fatalities being swept out to sea in South Africa, more than twelve hours after the earthquake. The tsunami were measured on tide gauges around the world, but no further fatalities or major damage were reported outside of the Indian Ocean.

Summary of the findings

To date, the main findings of the TEC process appear to be:

Finding 1

The relief phase was effective in ensuring that the immediate survival needs were met, through a mixture of local actions and international assistance. The number of people receiving assistance exceeded the number of people in need, with the last two fatalities being swept out to sea in South Africa, more than twelve hours after the earthquake. The tsunami were measured on tide gauges around the world, but no further fatalities or major damage were reported outside of the Indian Ocean.
Finding 3

Although local capacity is key to saving lives, this capacity is underestimated and undervalued by the international aid community as well as being overlooked by the international media. International agencies did not engage sufficiently with local actors, and assessed the skills of local actors relative to those of their own agency rather than in terms of skills appropriate to the local context.

Finding 4

The capacity of the international humanitarian system is not infinitely elastic. Despite the generous response to the tsunami, the appeals-based system for funding humanitarian emergencies is flawed, with a pattern of under-funding humanitarian response in general. This pattern of low funding for most emergencies limits the development of capacity within the international aid system, and makes it difficult for the system to scale-up to respond appropriately to a large emergency such as this.

Finding 5

Agencies focus too much on promoting their brand and not enough on the needs of the affected populations. Agencies are still not transparent or accountable enough to the people they are trying to assist. In some cases agencies are also not sufficiently accountable to those providing the funding.

Finding 6

The recovery phase is proving a far bigger challenge than the relief phase. This is due in part to the greater complexity of recovery and to the demands that such complexity places on the aid agencies.

An effective relief phase

Overall, the relief effort is viewed as having been effective. While the relief efforts by family and neighbours probably had the greatest life-saving effect, the international relief effort did prevent suffering through the provision of food, water and shelter on a greater scale than would have been possible with local resources alone.

Scale of the response

The TEC funding study confirmed the unprecedented scale of the public response, which broke records for voluntary giving for an international disaster in most of the countries reviewed. An unusually large proportion of funding flowed to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. At the end of 2005, many large NGOs and the Red Cross have unspent balances to continue operations for several years.

1 The support provided across the region by the United States military cost over $250 million.
2 Although the current relief effort is larger in scale, this was presented in the media as relating to its high priority (especially US funding) for the tsunami response.
3 This is a very conservative estimate and only includes contributions for which valid data is available. An estimate of private giving from countries not covered by TEC studies includes the total for international funding was $15.5 billion.
4 4.4 days worse in the Bay of Bengal in 2003 killed 350,000 and in 2004 one night. The Meghna Cyclone of 1999 killed at least 265,000 in 137 hours. Finding 5 Bangladesh 7.0 million people needed aid, 4.4 million people affected over 35 million people.
5 Donor funding dramatically increased after the UN’s Emergency Relief Co-ordinator, Jan Egeland, characterised the total aid gap given by richer countries as “sleazy”, at a tsunami press conference. It also appears that donor pledges have been translated into disbursements more quickly than in other large disasters.

Overall, support from all international sources was $14 billion. Affected governments and private donations from within affected countries added another $2.5 billion at least. There is no reliable estimate of the economic value of the contribution of the affected population to their own survival. Summary financial data is presented on page 6.

While the scale of the response was unprecedented, the scale of the disaster was not. The past forty years has seen disasters that have killed, displaced and affected more people, or have spread across more countries (e.g. droughts in Africa, hurricanes in the Caribbean).

The generosity of the public reaffirms that the basic humanitarian impulse, the impulse to help other human beings, remains strong. This alleviates concerns about “donor fatigue” or increasing selfishness in rich countries. However, it is not clear what triggers this impulse at some emergencies, such as the Bangladesh floods in 2004, yet relatively little funding from the public.

The ready availability of large amounts of funding allowed a rapid transition to rehabilitation interventions and allowed the use of cash distribution programmes. Cash distribution programmes have the advantage that they empower affected families to target the needs that they identify in their own assessments of the situation.

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agencies which normally lead co-ordination in particular sectors found that their own direct implementations competed for resources with their co-ordination role. These problems lessened with time.

Local capacity is undervalued by aid agencies and the media

A key finding from many of the TEC studies is that the local response was critical to saving lives. It is a common finding of evaluations of earthquakes and other natural disasters that the vast majority of those rescued are saved by their own actions or the actions of their families, neighbours, or officials. By the time the international rescue teams arrive the vast majority of the survivors have already been saved.

The TEC studies also found that the international aid community as a whole undervalues the very important contribution of local communities to their own survival and recovery. The international media also overlook local actors and focus on the international actors.

TEC studies found that the role of national governments was crucial in the response. Affected governments are paying at least $2.5 billion overall from their own sources to meet the tsunami response. Affected governments have also given generously, with $190 million having been recorded through formal channels.6

However, assistance from the affected community itself is often in forms that are rarely quantified in monetary terms (such as providing direct help, accommodation, or food), and it is impossible to estimate the value of what people have done for themselves to assist their own survival and recovery. It is also impossible to place a value on the effort that affected governments have put into the response, in terms of co-ordination and relief measures.

Remittances are another area where self-help gets overlooked by the international aid community. A recent World Bank report found that money sent home to developing countries by family members working abroad totals $417 billion through formal channels and informal channels may add another 50%. This is more than twice the total flow of aid to developing countries (an average of $72 billion for 1998 to 2003). The flow of remittances is very uneven, but India, one of the affected countries, is the largest recipient of remittances and will get $21 billion in 2005. In both Indonesia and Sri Lanka, remittances amount to about 1% of GDP. However, remittances may be particularly important in conflict areas like Chechnya and parts of Sri Lanka, due to it being safer for young men to travel abroad to work than to remain in the conflict area. However, the international aid community does not capture such data and the impact of remittances on tsunami recovery is not known.

The underestimation and misunderstanding of local capacity by international actors was a particular problem because of the huge resources that international actors had at their disposal. TEC studies found that during the relief and early recovery stages, many international actors, particularly those who did not have prior experience in the area, tended to underestimate local capacities while overestimating international capacity. In some cases, this led to a situation where inadequately

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding for the Tsunami (all amounts in billions of US dollars)</th>
<th>Official pledges</th>
<th>General public</th>
<th>All sources</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International sources</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>To non-governmental organisations</td>
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<td>To the Red Cross and Red Crescent</td>
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<td>Affected governments – at least</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population of affected countries – at least</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affected population – not measured</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.69</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. All of the figures above are very conservative. Only very solid data has been included in the table. This data may change as donor and other data is finalised, and as the funding synthesis team finalises any delays in the data.
2. Of the overall pledges, $5.3 billion has been committed (promised) in a binding way for a particular programme.
3. Of this, $2.1 billion has already been disbursed by the donors.
4. This is the amount from the banks’ own resources rather than from donor contributions to specific tsunami funds. All of the pledges from the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank have been committed.
5. This amount is rounded to $14 billion in the report to avoid creating a false impression of precision.
6. The huge contribution of the affected population in providing shelter for affected families, in their efforts to re-establish their livelihoods has not been measured.

5 The huge role of local capacity in determining who lives or dies is illustrated by the contrast between the cases of the Maldives and South Africa. In the Maldives many of those who died did so because they could not swim. In South Africa seven people were swept out to sea but five were rescued by those present.
6. This is an estimate of the contribution of the affected population to the relief and early recovery of their homes. This data is based on research by the TEC in the affected countries.
Funding system

The majority of funds pledged by governments appear to have been committed to specific projects, with a good portion already disbursed at the time of writing. In the past, donors have often not lived up to the pledges of assistance they have made, and the money has never been disbursed. The current appeal-based manner of funding global humanitarian response is very erratic. There was a great deal of money for the tsunami, but there is often very little money for other humanitarian emergencies. One of the main funding mechanisms is the UN’s system of flash appeals for sudden onset emergencies, and consolidated appeals for ongoing crises. The levels of such appeals often reflect estimates rather than the needs that are likely to be funded. Even then, there are huge variations and, on average, just over 60% of the consolidated and flash appeals managed by the UN are funded. Funding decisions and pledges for the tsunami response were made in parallel with or prior to the UN appeal document being produced and prior to there being a consolidated needs assessment. It was television coverage of the disaster that provided the basis on which funding decisions were based rather than any more formal assessment of needs. The result of such appeals is that funds are earmarked for a particular crisis, and cannot be reallocated to areas or sectors of greater need. Funding decisions were taken in response to domestic political pressure in donor countries rather than on the basis of formal needs assessments.

The studies found that while the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative makes a good start in guiding donor behaviour, there is a need for practical guidance to deal with apparent conflicts between its principles. There is also a need for a mechanism to track the flow of funds through the system, not only for official donors but also for private donations. The large amount of funding for NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement emphasises that they are central to humanitarian response and not just on the periphery. However, this new role brings added responsibilities in terms of co-ordination, accountability, and transparency. Unfortunately, recent evaluations show that NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are no stronger in these areas than the United Nations.

Demand for humanitarian action varies from year to year, and the humanitarian system has a certain “surge capacity” or capacity to rapidly scale-up operations. This surge capacity is not infinitely elastic.
Accountability versus brand promotion

Accountability refers to agencies being answerable for their actions to both the aid donors and aid recipients. Transparency is closely linked to accountability. Only when agencies are transparent do their donors and clients have the information to properly assess what an agency is doing. One issue emerging from the tsunami response is that agencies are focusing more on protecting their “brand” from negative publicity than on being accountable.

The lack of accountability to aid recipients is an acknowledged weakness of the international relief system. The recipients surveyed for the TEC studies reported that they were not adequately consulted. Furthermore, the studies found that there were large information gaps between agencies and the communities they were serving.

Accountability to donors is normally ensured by the rules of formal institutional donors. The prevalence of individual private donors meant that this mechanism did not apply. Agencies have compensated to some extent by assuring accountability reports to the general public. However, these reports are generally uncritical assessments of what agencies have done, aimed more at promoting their “brand” than presenting a balanced view of their performance.

Independent external evaluations provide one of the best means of accountability for the donor public. Such evaluations are particularly important as agencies normally only report their successes. Across many evaluations from TEC member agencies there were good examples of accountability with the publication of critical independent external evaluations by some agencies (including Oxfam, CARE, World Vision, the World Food Programme, and the joint evaluations commissioned by the TEC).

However, the Governing Board of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), decided not to publish their first real-time evaluation as originally planned. The board of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) in the UK decided not to publish the DEC evaluation report until after the first anniversary of the tsunami rather than before it as originally planned (with the result that there will be less media coverage of any criticisms in the evaluation report) and then only published a summary rather than the full report. This is a matter of some concern not only because IFRC and the DEC represent over $4 billion of funding from the general public between them, but also because previous DEC evaluations have been praised as being among the best in the sector.

The TEC studies found that agencies competed not for funding (which everyone had large amounts of), but for turf and clients. Competition was in the interests of the affected people as a whole, as duplication and waste reduced the overall resources available.

The level of competition varied throughout the response, with good inter-agency cooperation seen at the very start of the relief phase being overwhelmed by competition as the relief phase increased in pace. The start of the recovery phase was also marked by a renewed burst of competition, particularly for shelter beneficiaries, but collaboration increased as the recovery phase developed.

The response was supply-led rather than demand-driven. In the initial phase, particularly for shelter beneficiaries, but collaboration increased as the recovery phase developed.

Rehabilitation and recovery is far more complex than relief

The studies found that the affected populations were more satisfied with the initial relief effort than with the recovery effort. It is not clear if this declining approval is due to: recovery needs being more complex than relief needs, the longer time scale needed for recovery interventions to bear fruit, increased expectations for the recovery caused by the over-simplified relief effort, or a mixture of all three. The greater complexity of the recovery phase included the need to address land rights and legal
issues, and shifting government policies on housing reconstruction.

One positive aspect is that almost the entire aid community acknowledge the importance of government and community ownership of the recovery process. However, there have been frustrations and delays in developing this ownership. These issues are due in part to the difficult and time-consuming process of arriving at consensus on complex tradeoffs between speed and quality of response and in deciding where people should be encouraged to live so as to reduce risks from future disasters.

Overall, the TEC studies found that the international tsunami response missed the opportunity to address issues of equity, conflict, gender, and governance in an integrated and holistic way. However, some caution is needed here as a single emergency response, no matter how well funded, cannot on its own hope to put in place profound social, cultural, and economic change to completely transform deep-rooted, pre-existing inequalities.

Despite some initiatives, there has been relatively little attention to developing the disaster risk management capacity of communities. This lack of attention has occurred despite the agreement by the international community at the World Conference on Natural Disasters in Kobe in early 2005 to make disaster risk management an integral part of the response. Disaster risk management is a key area of concern given that some of the affected countries are particularly disaster prone.

In the tsunami response, “build back better” has been adopted as a slogan, implying that the response should move beyond limited recovery to development. The transition from relief to rehabilitation, recovery, and development has always been a difficult area in the past. The complexity of development means that there is no “one right way” and, unlike relief, there are no broadly agreed standards for rehabilitation, recovery, and development.

One of the differences between relief and development is that while development may seek to reduce existing inequalities, relief typically seeks to avoid worsening them through seeking to “do no harm.” There is concern that increasing inequality can promote conflict within society. The TEC studies found that, due in part to both poor contextual knowledge and to the pressure to act quickly, relief and recovery interventions have not promoted equity. Proportionately more assistance, especially in the recovery phase, has flowed to the better-off, to males, and to the better organized. Marginalized groups have lost out in the assistance programmes.

Both Sri Lanka and Indonesia have been affected by civil conflicts before the disaster. The conflict in Aceh was ongoing at the time of the tsunami and continued for some months afterwards. The advocates in Sri Lanka were observing a ceasefire, if not always a truce. While the tsunami response has provided a window for peace, this opportunity seems to have been wasted in Indonesia, but not in Sri Lanka.

The tsunami response meant that far more assistance flowed to those affected by the tsunami than to those affected by the conflict. This imbalance threatens the sustainability of some of the recovery interventions. Such inequity is particularly dangerous in societies that are recovering from armed conflict.

Annexe:
Impact map for the earthquake and tsunamis

Sources: Deaths (USAID, 2005), except for Myanmar, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Kenya (AFP, 2005), and Yemen (IRIN, 2005b). Loss and damage, (Said et al., 2005), except for Yemen (IRIN, 2005b), and Seychelles (IRIN, 2005a).
The Impact on Local and National Capacities
The Local Capacities evaluation was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Disaster Mitigation Institute of India (DMI). The evaluation team carried out field work in Indonesia and Sri Lanka in September and October 2005. The field work was supported by visits to donor countries and to Thailand to interview key decision makers. This evaluation focused on the first three months of the response only. A draft report was circulated to 210 interviewees for their comments in mid-December and a consolidated draft report is expected in January 2006.

Donor Response
The study of the International Community’s Funding of the Tsunami Emergency and Relief is led by Danida, Danish International Development Assistance. This evaluation is the most complex in terms of the number of component studies. There are over twenty component studies organized around six themes, including: global funds flows, funding by governments, funding to non-governmental organizations, funding to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, funding to the United Nations, and local funding. Different studies were commissioned by different donor aid departments and NGOs, each of which was responsible for the quality of their component study. Most of the work of the teams was carried out in donor country capitals, but teams from the local funding study carried out field work in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, and Thailand in October 2005. All the component studies have been submitted in draft format but not all are as yet in a final version. A draft funding synthesis report is expected in late January 2006.

The Synthesis Study
The Synthesis Study will synthesise the five TEC thematic evaluations, but will also be informed by evaluations carried out by the TEC member agencies, as well as tertiary sources. The Synthesis Study will be published together with the thematic evaluations.

Annexe: The current status of the TEC Thematic Studies

There are five TEC thematic studies. A sixth study, the Impact Assessment, managed by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), was originally expected to inform the TEC studies, but will not be issuing a first report until well into 2006. Almost all of the TEC studies have fallen behind their planned timetable for numerous reasons, ranging from an over-optimistic initial timetable to the illness of key team members.

Co-ordination
The Evaluation of Co-ordination was commissioned by the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs. An inter-agency steering committee composed of OCRA, UNICEF, UNDP, Save the Children UK, USAID and IFRC guided implementation and provided quality control and overall supervision. The evaluation team carried out field work in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Maldives and Somaliland in September to November 2005. The field work was supported by visits to New York and Geneva to interview key United Nations and Red Cross personnel. Draft country reports are expected to be circulated to interviewees in late December, with a first draft of the main report in late January 2006.

Needs Assessment
The Needs Assessment evaluation is led by a group of three agencies: The World Health Organisation, Swiss Development Cooperation, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. These three organisations also formed the steering committee for the evaluation. The evaluation team carried out field work in Indonesia and Sri Lanka in September and October 2005. The field work was supported by visits to donor countries and to Thailand to interview key decision makers. This evaluation focused on the first three months of the response only. A draft report was circulated to 210 interviewees for their comments in mid-December and a consolidated draft report is expected in January 2006.

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Data sources on the impact of the tsunamis


