



**Embargo: Not for publication before 14h00 CET (13h00 GMT), Friday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005** (time converter: <http://www.timezoneconverter.com/cgi-bin/tzc.tzc>)

## **EVALUATION OF INTERNATIONAL TSUNAMI RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS INEQUITIES IN AID SPENDING**

A major independent evaluation published today calls for a fairer system of funding emergencies so that all those affected can escape suffering and death and rebuild their lives. This is essential given the rise in natural disasters the world is facing.

The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC), an international multi-agency effort to enhance humanitarian aid, applauds the public for their record-breaking donations to the 2004 Asian tsunami, while highlighting how this enormous influx of funds revealed discrepancies in how aid money is raised and spent.

A total of at least US\$ 13.5 billion was raised, US\$ 5.5 billion from the general public, amounting to over US \$7,100 for every affected person. This contrasts starkly to only US\$3 per head spent on someone affected by the 2004 floods in Bangladesh.

The TEC report reveals that emergency relief is not given only on the basis of need, but in response to political pressures and what aid agencies believe may be popular with the donating public. The report calls for independent monitoring of governments to make their funding systems impartial, flexible, transparent and in line with the principles of good donorship.<sup>1</sup>

Mr John Telford, Lead Author of the TEC report, says: “The high-profile coverage of the tsunami led to the largest and fastest funded response ever. But the glare of public attention pressurised agencies to spend quickly and visibly, often causing them to neglect formal needs assessments and under-estimate the complexity of post-disaster recovery.” Other global emergencies not benefiting from as much media coverage receive a fraction of the funding: “The gross inequity in funding for different emergencies is evident in people reduced to half-rations in Sudan in the face of increasing malnutrition, while Iraq and Afghanistan continue to get generous funding,” adds Mr Telford.

The report presents an appeal to donor governments for more consistent donations and support prior to disasters to help states in high-risk zones reduce risk and respond better when emergencies strike. It calls on international agencies not to by-pass but to work through and improve the capacity of local structures already in place when affected countries are overstretched in a disaster.

Local affected people and their neighbours saved virtually every life that was to be saved in the tsunami before international rescue teams arrived. Mr Telford says: “While aid agencies are recognised for providing affected populations with the security they needed to begin planning what do next, they need to involve them in the management of the response. This is particularly important when emergency relief priorities rapidly change to those of rebuilding and re-establishing livelihoods. The importance of this change and frequent poor performance in meeting people’s longer term priorities is reflected in many findings and several recommendations in the report.”

The TEC report also urges governments to fund international organisations to improve personnel, coordination and quality control between emergencies. While these may be ‘invisible’ investments, Mr Telford highlights their importance: “The scale and frequency of modern emergencies is on the rise and the quality, capacity and regulation of the international relief system is currently inadequate to support this. The public should also not think that their responsibility ends once they have handed over a cheque. Insisting on

TEC press release

independent regulation and transparent reporting will go a long way to ensuring that agencies maintain the professional standards they have set for themselves.”

The evaluation represents the largest and most thorough review of the humanitarian community since 1996 and the report and launch events aim to provide learning to the sector and accountability to the public. For more information on the TEC, log onto [www.tsunami-evaluation.org](http://www.tsunami-evaluation.org)

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**For further information:**

- ◆ **Online access to journalist materials** including photographs and details of the launch in London and Geneva are available on request.
- ◆ **Media consultant:** Sherylin Thompson, [s.thompson@odi.org.uk](mailto:s.thompson@odi.org.uk), phone: +44 (0)20 7922 0314, mobile: +44 (0)7940 516 806, [www.tsunami-evaluation.org](http://www.tsunami-evaluation.org)
- ◆ **Currency converter:** [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic)

**Notes to editors:**

- ◆ **The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC)** is an independent learning and accountability initiative in the humanitarian sector. Work by TEC member agencies represents the most intensive study of a humanitarian response since the Rwanda multi-donor evaluation in the mid-1990s, and is the first time in 10 years that the sector has sought to scrutinise itself as a whole.
- ◆ **The TEC has three aims:**
  1. To improve the quality of humanitarian action – including linkages to longer term recovery and development – by learning lessons from the international response to the tsunami.
  2. To provide accountability to both donor and affected-country populations for the overall response.
  3. To test the TEC approach as a possible model for future joint collaborative evaluation.
- ◆ **The TEC has over 40 member agencies** from across the humanitarian sector. These agencies represent a broad coalition of UN agencies, donors, (I)NGOs, the Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement, and research groups.
- ◆ The report covers the first 8 to 11 months of the response to the Tsunami.
- ◆ <sup>1</sup>For more information on **Good Humanitarian Donorship**, log onto: [http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/Good\\_humanitarian\\_donorship.htm](http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/Good_humanitarian_donorship.htm)