

UNDP and the Indian Ocean Tsunami Recovery

Key Challenges during the Post-Tsunami Recovery



Four months after the Tsunami: where we are?

The human impact of the Tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean is one of the largest in the recorded history of the region. Neighboring communities and local authorities carried the brunt of the initial response to the tragedy. The international humanitarian community mobilized immediately and in a massive display of support joined hands with the different national governments in the planning and implementation of relief operations. The four and a half months since the Tsunami have shown the positive results of the tremendous efforts made by all stakeholders and the generosity of those who contributed in cash and in kind, exceeding in scale and scope the response to any other natural disaster in history.

This combined effort resulted in a **largely successful, albeit not flawless, immediate relief phase**. Results are evident in several areas: prevention of further deaths and spread of diseases, enough provision of food, securing and managing emergency shelter and emergency medical care, provision of non food relief items, cash transfers by the Government and private sources, etc.

However, humanitarian needs are going to persist for many more months, until full reconstruction takes root. Meanwhile early recovery programmes in the current transition stage, though gaining momentum, will require investing more time and effort than initially anticipated.

Challenges ahead and emerging issues

The region is in a critical stage of the transition. As the relief operations decrease emphasis should be placed in “build back better”. This means better housing, but also communities better prepared and less vulnerable to natural disasters, with improved health and education services, lower levels of malnutrition and sustainable livelihoods.

Today, we benefit from a rich analysis of the reconstruction needs. Different assessments were produced by the governments and the international financial institutions (ADB, WB and JBIC) supported by several UN agencies, these different analyses have in the meantime been largely reconciled.

The **Phase II** of the Damage and Needs Assessment has been more participatory and inclusive, involving a wider range of stakeholders. Diverse teams comprising multi-sectoral experts drawn from government agencies, UN, bilateral and multi-lateral agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector have completed the field missions and reports. The results are widely shared by the governments and the other stakeholders involved. The main focus of this phase of the exercise was to examine a variety of issues connected to implementation mechanisms and in consequence, emphasize not so much on *what* needs to be done as on *how*. It is envisaged that the outcome of this phase will also provide the basis for local level implementation plans.

An important feature of the joint needs assessment is the commitment of the multi-stakeholders involved in the process to ensure that the implementation of the recovery plan adheres closely to the **guiding principles of the recovery and reconstruction strategy**. The guiding principles refer to issues such as conflict sensitivity, reduction of future vulnerabilities to natural hazards (including floods, cyclones and landslides), equity, subsidiarity, community empowerment, transparency, as well as cross cutting considerations such as governance, gender-sensitivity, environment, and human rights. **Operationalizing these principles will remain a key challenge.**

The magnitude of the catastrophe and the complexity of the resulting needs pose some **important operational challenges as the efforts begin to shift from relief to recovery**. Many of these issues were analyzed in the second phase of the needs assessment. Some of the salient examples include:

- **Internal Displaced Persons (IDP's).** Displaced families are currently leaving in temporary shelter (e.g. with relatives, public buildings, tents) or transitional shelter. These people will have to move, sooner or later, to permanent houses. How, when and where is this going to happen?

- **Livelihoods.** There seems to be some problems with (i) the delivery mechanisms of some programs, (ii) the lack of incentives for the delivery institutions to collaborate actively, (ii) the need to clarify who is eligible for cash transfers or loans and what are the parameters of these programs (e.g. gender equity). Finally, an exit strategy for current mechanisms (e.g. governmental transfers, cash for work interventions) needs to be considered.
- **Changing approaches.** There is a need to identify early gaps resulting from the departure of relief actors and the increase in development partners. One example of this is food security. We should progressively move from general food distribution to more targeted feeding of vulnerable groups and food security interventions.
- **Coordination.** Because of the number of actors involved in the recovery (on the average more than 400 agencies have been operating at any given point of time since the tsunami) the degree of coordination needs to be improved at all levels.

Transitions are never easy

In many cases, the poorer and more vulnerable groups still tend to reconstruct outside of the formally instituted process given that needs and demands have to be satisfied at rhythms that are not compatible with the rate of implementation of formal processes. As a result of that, vulnerability is often reconstructed following natural disasters. This is a challenge that has to be faced head on by all of us if the recovery and reconstruction effort is to be effective and long lasting.

Building on the latest assessments, these critical issues will require particular attention in the near future:

- **Equity issues,** as the recovery effort moves forward it has become increasingly evident that it needs to be sensitive to a broader equity context. This implies equitable treatment among different geographical areas affected by the tsunami vs deprived population and poverty stricken communities, conflict-related IDPs vs tsunami-related IDPs. Other equity dimensions relate to gender considerations, as the disaster destroyed family units issues of property rights will become critical for women-headed households.
- **Land and property issues,** Land titling and security of land tenure are crucial issues of a sustainable recovery process. Land has a series of direct implications for both the enjoyment of human rights as well as the overall human and economic development of post disaster situations. In the post tsunami reconstruction programmes, Housing, land and property (HLP) rights challenges are common to all countries and territories. Restoring HLP rights to relocating populations and displaced persons, resolving ongoing HLP disputes on reconstruction sites, re-establishing HLP rights registration system protecting the HLP rights of vulnerable groups and many other housing, land and property issues invariably face the international community in post-disaster settings. Appropriate mechanisms should be put in place to handle property claims, with a mandate for both mediation, adjudication (subject to appeal to courts), and flexible types of remedies is the effective way of handling such large scale property issues.
- **Coordination issues.** The magnitude of the task, multiplicity of actors and complexity of the issues are all factors that pose formidable coordination challenges. These have become more demanding as the transition towards recovery has uncovered policy and implementation issues that call for well synchronized responses, for example in shelter and livelihood issues. This has made evident the need to find the right mix of roles between centralized coordination mechanisms and line ministries and local authorities. Another area of concern has been the paucity of information flows between the central and local levels of authority; this has at times resulted in confusion about entitlements amongst local communities and delays in implementation, adding to the frustration of those who perceive the overall response as slow and unclear.
- **Capacity development.** The manifold challenges to be faced during the recovery and reconstruction phase will require an important effort of capacity development at all levels, but in particular at local level which was totally destroyed by Tsunami. The additional burdens faced by local authorities during the relief stage have already stretched their resources to the limits, additional responsibilities soon to emerge in the subsequent phases will only add to their challenges. With increased capacity and empowerment, local authorities will also be in a position to take full charge making the principal of subsidiarity a real possibility.
- **Transparency**
It is a legitimate concern how Governments will manage the large amount of funds coming into relief and reconstruction activities. International community, including the United Nations, is working together

to build in a number of safeguard mechanisms to reduce the risk of corruption and make sure that recovery is taking place in a transparent manner. Following are some examples of measures undertaken in Indonesia.

- Establishment of the multi-donor trust fund (MDTF): Approximately USD 500 million is being channeled through the MDTF, in which fiduciary responsibility resides with the World Bank.
 - All procurement announcements and bidding awarding are posted on the e-Aceh web site.
 - Oversight body is established to monitor the overall reconstruction activities.
- ***Transition from Emergency shelter to Permanent shelter.*** Resolving the transitional shelter issues will greatly facilitate the provision of essential services in situ and the full development of livelihood initiatives. With these key ingredients in place we can look forward towards the stabilisation of the affected communities that will enable their resilience and creativity to flourish. This will also allow the necessary time and space to pursue the full recovery and reconstruction task.