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**LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN TSUNAMI RECOVERY:
LESSONS LEARNED AND EMERGING PRINCIPLES**

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1. Background

On 26 December 2004, a massive earthquake registering 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred off the northwest coast of Sumatra, sending several tsunami waves radiating through the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean Tsunami (the *Tsunami*) struck a vast area across Asia, even reaching as far as the coast of East Africa. The impact of the Tsunami on affected countries was severe in terms of lives lost as well as the widespread destruction caused. While the exact numbers will never be known the number of casualties is believed to be between 200,000 and 300,000.¹ Although previous natural disasters have resulted in similar numbers of casualties the Tsunami is unique in the amount of destruction it caused and the wide area that was affected. For example, more than two thirds of the coastline of Sri Lanka and more than 654 villages in Aceh and Nias in Indonesia² were affected. The coastal areas of India, Maldives and Thailand were also seriously affected.³ Whereas relatively few larger cities suffered any significant damage from the disaster (with Banda Aceh – the capital of Aceh Province as the major exception), it did take a heavy toll on many urban areas⁴. The Tsunami caused vast damage to local Infrastructure and Service Delivery (ISD) in almost all sectors which are of crucial importance to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Yet, despite the extensive destruction caused by the Tsunami the macroeconomic impact of the disaster appears limited (ADB, 2005a:20) and it is not expected that the disaster will significantly impact on the overall ability of the affected countries to achieve the MDGs (perhaps with the exception of Maldives). However the Tsunami will impact significantly on the possibility of reaching the MDGs in the affected areas, with the economic and social impact of the disaster being felt most acutely at the local and community level. Although not significantly impacting on national poverty levels in the affected countries (again with the exception of Maldives) it is estimated that two million people were dragged into poverty⁵ in addition to dragging the already poor into even deeper poverty as a result of the Tsunami. Under a fast recovery scenario, as outlined by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), most countries will have eliminated poverty caused by the disaster by 2007. However, in the slow recovery scenario there will still be an additional 1.1 million poor in 2007 (ADB 2005b:24).

Thus, whereas a disaster of such magnitude requires national responses, the local governance institutions in rural areas along the coast and in the cities and urban agglomerations need to be brought to the forefront in meeting the challenges resulting from the Tsunami – as its impacts have been felt largely at the local level. The importance of local governance was recently emphasized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome which states that local authorities have an important role to play “in contributing to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the [MDGs]” (UN 2005:39). The role of local governments in meeting the MDG target is even more crucial in a context of disaster.

Nevertheless, the role of local governance, despite the crucial role that it plays in post disaster recovery, is an area that has to date received relatively little attention. The results and outcomes of recovery efforts are studied, but rarely the processes. When the processes are

¹ The 2005 UNDP Human Development Report puts the number of deaths at 300,000 whereas ADB in its Asian Development Outlook estimates the number of deaths to be “more than 200,000 people” (p. 20).

² The assessments/estimates vary significantly and some studies suggest up to 1,300 villages (e.g. World Bank 2005).

³ In Asia Bangladesh, Malaysia and Myanmar were also affected by the Tsunami, although to a lesser extent the countries mentioned above as well as reaching Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles and the coasts of Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania.

⁴ In e.g. the Southern Province of Sri Lanka, 63 percent of the total assessed damage of local government infrastructure occurred to the property of urban and municipal councils. See *Details of the Damages caused by Tsunami Disaster to Local Authorities: Southern Province*.

⁵ These figures are based on national poverty lines and ADB staff estimates.

indeed scrutinised, focus tends to be on donor resources and implementation and seldom covers in-depth local governance aspects. There are a few noteworthy exceptions (e.g. World Bank 2005; Telford et al 2004; and Wiles et al 2005) but other studies have more or less completely omitted aspects related to local governance (e.g. Beck 2005).

The purpose of this paper is to provide an analysis of lessons learned and emerging principles on the functioning of local governance in disaster recovery (and briefly relief and early recovery)⁶ – drawing primarily on experiences from the five countries most seriously affected by the Tsunami: India, Indonesia, Maldives, Thailand and Sri Lanka but also experiences from previous disasters. The main focus of the study is on: (i) the impact of the Tsunami on local governance institutions and local government service delivery; (ii) the role of local governance institutions in recovery - the processes of recovering the institutions themselves but, more fundamentally, their functioning within the national framework for recovery and their role in local recovery; and (iii) how local governance functioned in the recovery period focusing on the *local processes* - in particular key principles such as representation, participation, accountability, transparency, peace building and integrity. The paper will also briefly address the role and functioning of donor programmes in relation to the above, but focus is on the lessons learned on how national systems of decentralized governance function in recovery situations.

This paper presents the findings of an initiative by a group of UNDP practitioners working in the interface between *Decentralization and Local Governance* and *Crisis Prevention and Recovery* to analyse the lessons learned on local governance in Tsunami recovery. It has been written by Henrik Fredborg Larsen, Policy Advisor on Decentralization and Local Governance and Nils Taxell, Research Officer in the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, together with Aminath Shooza (UNDP Maldives), Eugenia Piza-Lopez (UNDP Indonesia), Fredrick Abayratne (UNDP Sri Lanka), Mohammed Zahid (UNDP Maldives), Pradeep Sharma (UNDP India), Ryratana Suwanraks (UNDP Thailand), and Toshihiro Nakamura (UNDP Indonesia). The authors are also grateful for comments and suggestions received from Shanti Faiia (UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo), Jorg Nadoll (UNDP RCB) and Devanand Ramiah (UNDP Sri Lanka).

Field research was conducted in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand in March/April 2005. In each of these countries, interviews and focus group discussions took place with local governments and a range of other stakeholders at the lowest and – where it exists - second lowest tier of local government in both rural and urban areas as well as with the national/provincial level institutions supporting local governance. Sampling was done in order to cover various socio-economic conditions, in particular the reliance on tourism as opposed to fishery or other income-generating activities and to cover cities and well as towns and other urban areas. The study also builds on the body of analysis conducted in all of the Tsunami affected areas and analyses some of the lessons learned from other disasters in Asia and beyond. More fundamentally, it brings out the experiences of local governance and development practitioners greatly benefiting from their hands-on work helping in the recovery of local institutions and services. It is hoped that this study will contribute towards an increased understanding of the complex and poorly documented area of local governance in disaster recovery.

⁶ As defined by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat: (i) **Relief/Response** refers to the “provision of assistance or intervention immediately after a disaster to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs of those people affected; and (ii) **Recovery** (which includes rehabilitation and reconstruction) refers to “decisions and actions taken after a disaster with a view to restoring or improving the pre-disaster living conditions [of the affected communities], while encouraging and facilitating necessary adjustments to reduce disaster risk”.

2. Introduction: local governance in Tsunami affected areas

Before examining the issues in greater detail, it is important to note that local *governance* and local *government* mean very different things in the five countries. There are three major dimensions to this diversity. First, whereas all of the affected countries have local councils comprised of elected representatives and as such have a degree of political decentralization, decentralization at large has taken place to very different degrees. Local governments in India, Indonesia and Thailand have discretionary authority over, and are accountable to their constituencies for, a significant share of the national budget whereas in Sri Lanka, actual decentralization is more limited, and in the Maldives the development committees have merely been grafted onto a system of local administration functioning as advisory bodies. Second, within as well as between countries, there are large variations in the capacity and resources of local government institutions. There is a major difference between e.g. Phuket Municipality in Thailand with some 380-odd staff and a significant annual budget and a small rural government in e.g. an island in Maldives or a village in Sri Lanka. In making comparisons between different local government bodies differences in jurisdiction, size, capacity, funding, etc. should be acknowledged as should urban-rural distinction. Third, the countries differ simply in the modality of decentralization adopted i.e. in representational arrangement, machinery for delivering local services, administrations and linkages between elected representatives and bureaucrats, strategies for balancing deconcentration and devolution⁷ etc.

Also, it is important to take into account the difference between policy and practice in the affected areas. Whereas India, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka⁸ and – to some extent – Maldives have established the necessary legal, policy and operational frameworks for local governance, implementation has not always fully taken place in the affected areas. This is not least because many of the areas in which the Tsunami struck are also affected by conflict of vertical, and partly also horizontal, nature creating obstacles to the development of local governance capacity as well as leading to a reluctance on the part of central government to move ahead with decentralization. There are however divergences, with some of the affected areas, as an outcome of peace agreements, having arrangements for decentralization of an ‘asymmetrical’ nature granting local governments in these areas a higher degree of fiscal devolution than is the case in the rest of the country (e.g. Aceh with its special autonomy status has been granted a greater share of revenue from its natural resources, including oil and gas, than other provinces in Indonesia [BAPPENAS, 2005: 15]).

That said, there is considerable scope for analysing the lessons learned and attempt to develop an emerging set of principles which can help provide guidance for working with the local governance machinery in recovery. This paper will focus on the role of local representative institutions and the overall system of devolved local government and the role of local elected councils. In all of the countries, local administrations serving as extensions of

⁷ There are two main forms of decentralization namely: (i) **administrative decentralization** involves the transfer of decision making authority, resources and responsibilities for the delivery of selected public services from the central government to other lower levels of government, agencies, and field offices of central government line agencies. There are two basic types. **Deconcentration** is the transfer of authority and responsibility from one level of the central government to another with the local unit accountable to the central government ministry or agency which has been decentralized. **Delegation**, on the other hand, is the redistribution of authority and responsibility to local units of government or agencies that are not always necessarily, branches or local offices of the delegating authority, with the bulk of accountability still vertical and to the delegating central unit; and (ii) **political decentralization** transfers political power and authority to sub-national levels such as elected village councils and state level bodies. Where such transfer is made to a local level of public authority that is autonomous and fully independent from the devolving authority, **devolution** takes place (UNDP, 2004a:4).

⁸ It should however be noted that in Sri Lanka local governments in the government controlled areas of the country are elected whereas there have been no elected local government in the LTTE controlled areas for the past eight years. The Tsunami impacted both the Northeast of the country (LTTE-controlled) and the South. Thus the varying governance contexts will have implications for the recovery process. This paper deals only with the recovery process in the Southern part of the country.

line-ministries at the central level were assigned a lead role in recovery. With the extensive focus on decentralisation across the region and not least in countries such as India, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, it is relevant to study the functioning of the local governments and of the local governance processes more broadly to further understand the impact of the disaster on the institutions, the roles and responsibilities assigned to them and the capacity and functioning of the democratic, administrative and financial processes. Such an in-depth study of the local governance context for each of the five countries is however beyond the scope of this paper.

3. The impact of the Tsunami on local governance institutions and services

3.1 Major disruption of local service delivery

As discussed above, the degree of decentralization and the model for local governance adopted varies significantly among the five countries. However, with the exception of Maldives, the local government in all the countries has significant responsibilities for local service delivery devolved to them and the Tsunami caused heavy damage to the supporting infrastructure. Whereas the mandate and responsibilities of local government in the five countries vary, the Tsunami in most affected countries damaged the following local government social and economic infrastructure: pre-schools/child care centres, health clinics, public markets, drinking water systems (wells, pipes etc.), playgrounds and public parks, libraries, slaughterhouses, streets and minor roads, training centres (e.g. vocational training), crematoriums/cemeteries, community buildings/conference halls, sanitation (sewage systems and public toilets), street lights, bus stands, etc.

The extent of the damage caused by the Tsunami across the affected countries is tremendous. The total cost of the damage caused by the Tsunami in **Indonesia** is estimated at US\$ 4.5 billion. Most of the damages and losses (78 percent) were in the private sector (World Bank, 2005:52). Despite this the damages to service delivery and other infrastructure at the local level was extensive affecting all sectors with local government in the most heavily impacted areas completely seizing to function, including law and order functions, and service delivery in other areas being severely disrupted. In **India** damage to rural and municipal infrastructure was relatively limited, as there was limited infrastructure present in the affected areas. Damage and losses has been estimated to US\$29.6 million. The Tsunami also caused damage and losses to the health and education sectors (US\$23.6 million) and the transportation sector (US\$35.5 million – although the transportation sector as a whole is not the responsibility of local government) (ADB, UN and World Bank, 2005). In **Maldives** infrastructure for service delivery (primarily community infrastructure) damaged by the Tsunami included drinking water, pre-schools, markets, sewage systems, storage facilities and telephone systems. Overall damage in **Sri Lanka** has been estimated to US\$1 billion. However the damage is primarily concentrated to the private sector (ADB, JBIC and World Bank, 2005:3). Despite this local government infrastructure did suffer damages, including the destruction of public markets, health clinics, pre-schools, drainage systems, roads, etc. In the Southern Provinces of Sri Lanka alone, reviewed as part of this study, the damage is estimated by the Local Government Department to total Rs. 600 million (approx. US\$6 million)⁹.

⁹ See *Details of the Damages caused by Tsunami Disaster to Local Authorities: Southern Province*.

3.2 The impact of the Tsunami on local governance institutions

In analysing the broader issues surrounding local governance in disaster recovery it is also necessary to look at what happens to the institutions, i.e. the institutions/organizations as well as the wider systems and processes of local governance, as a result of the disaster. Enhanced knowledge in this area will help decision-makers devise the right strategies for: (i) the recovery of the institutions; and (ii) the appropriate role of the local governance institutions in recovery. In particular, appreciating the overall capacity constraints and the need for sequencing, the balance between the two are crucial; increased knowledge will help determine exactly which capacities exist to carry out functions related to existing mandates and new tasks as well as to determine which capacities can feasibly be re-established and at which stage.

The physical impact of different natural disasters on local governments differs due to the nature of the disaster. Disasters such as the recent earthquakes in Gujarat (India) and Bam (Iran) cause widespread damage across all sectors including service delivery infrastructure in a limited geographical area and tend to have extensive impact on local governance institutions. The earthquake in Bam killed more than 30,000 people and severely damaged or destroyed some 85 percent of the houses, commercial units, health facilities and administrative buildings in the city of Bam and surrounding villages (UNDP, 2004b). The earthquake in Gujarat killed over 20,000 and led to extensive destruction including two district hospitals destroyed, and over 1,200 health clinics (mostly in rural areas), and over 11,600 schools destroyed or damaged with similar destruction of both rural and urban water supply schemes (World Bank, 2000). Severe flooding - for example the disaster in Bangladesh during the 2004 monsoon season which covered 33 districts and affected 36 million people and killed nearly 800 - affects the physical infrastructure (4 million houses either partially damaged or completely destroyed in Bangladesh) and thus also the buildings and structures of local governments but the most severe losses are concentrated in the housing, transport and agricultural sectors (Beck 2005). The flooding in Nepal in 2002 and other years, on the other hand, had many casualties but due to the nature of the disaster (affecting more heavily the settlements, or part of settlements, on slopes prone to land slides or in low-lying areas in or close to the river basin) the impact on local governance organisations was fairly limited and they remained capable of supporting relief and recovery efforts.

The impact of the Tsunami on local government institutions fell somewhere in-between the extremes cited above with major differences between the countries. The Tsunami primarily affected the lowest tier of local government; in Aceh and Nias, out of 23 agencies in local government visited by a World Bank assessment team, only three had offices that were affected by the Tsunami or earthquakes - all of which were located in Banda Aceh (World Bank, 2005:33). However, offices at sub-district and village level in the affected areas have often been destroyed. In Sri Lanka, in the heavily affected Southern Province visited by the UNDP team, the only two offices which were completely destroyed were sub-offices of the Pradeshiya Sabhas and additional damage (e.g. to walls and files) was to a very large extent to lower tier local government units i.e., Pradeshiya Sabhas and Urban/Municipal Councils. In the majority of cases local government offices remained functioning. However, damages also occurred at higher tiers of local government; in e.g. Sri Lanka, four district headquarters were affected, having a major impact on service delivery capacity as the bulk of (deconcentrated) responsibilities are assigned to the District level. In some cases there was significant indirect impact on the functioning of local governments at higher level. In the Maldives, for example, the Island Development Committee Chairs which constitute the majority of members of the councils at the upper level of local government (Atoll Development Committees) generally gave preference to the affairs in their own constituency rather than attending meetings in, and hence support the democratic functioning of, the Atoll Development Committees.

In assessing the impact, as indicated above, three categories can be identified: (i) casualties among local government elected representatives and staff; (ii) impact on the physical infrastructure such as buildings, equipment and files - here, a clear distinction should be made between the local government's infrastructure for their own use (that is administration and council affairs) and the infrastructure for service delivery (as discussed above) and other purposes, and (iii) the impact on the wider 'systems, norms and procedures'.

Among the five countries, it was only Indonesia that suffered a high number of casualties among local government staff; on average 9 percent of the civil servants were killed in the disaster and the number of casualties in Banda Aceh reached 20 percent. In the other countries, there were also losses from among the ranks of local government staff and elected representatives. However, the overall pattern is that officials killed are primarily from the lower echelons, including contract staff (e.g. in Aceh and Nias, 85 percent of casualties were low level or contract staff [World Bank, 2005]) and there were relatively few casualties amongst chairs and members of the elected councils (e.g. in the Southern Province in Sri Lanka, there were no casualties from among the local politicians). Overall, there was comparatively limited impact to the physical infrastructure used by the local government for administration and council affairs. In Aceh and Nias for example damage to the public administration is estimated at US\$81.2 million (BAPPENAS, 2005:63) to be compared with the total cost which is estimated at US\$ 4.5 billion. Infrastructure for service delivery and other services on the other hand suffered much more significant damage as noted above. In the majority of countries affected by the Tsunami systems, local government institutional capacity remained intact or was rapidly restored, with the exception of some isolated or remote locations such as the Andaman and Nicobar Island (India). The main exception to this was Aceh and Nias in Indonesia which suffered much greater disruptions in this regard, partly resulting from the institutional capacity not being firmly in place prior to the Tsunami (see below).

Yet despite the damages inflicted on local governments by the Tsunami, recovery (of local government) has been relatively rapid in most of the affected countries. A World Bank assessment of the capacity of local government in four affected district in Aceh found that, in most areas, local governments had managed to return to their pre-disaster levels of capacity (World Bank, 2005:32). As such, the challenges with respect to local governance six months after the disaster are far less a product of the loss of capacity due to the disaster than a reflection of their strengths and weaknesses prior to the disaster. This is further exacerbated by the limitations posed by how local governments are represented in national task forces and the roles that they are assigned in the relief and recovery process. These are key elements determining the capacity of local governments to cope with the demand to engage in new activities and to rapidly re-establish infrastructure and services (see further below).

4. Local governance in the recovery effort

4.1 *What has been the role of local governments in recovery?*

Given the vast differences in decentralization and capacity of local governance, and the political realities in the five countries, local governments were given very different roles in recovery and the local results and processes have been very different. In looking at the role of local governments in recovery it is also necessary to look at how the challenges to local governance institutions and service delivery outlined above have been addressed.

It is often only central (or state) governments which have the capacity to manage the huge commitment of resources required for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction programs. As a result of this, governments in developing countries have tended to establish a special agency at the apex level with reconstruction programmes implemented on a more centralized basis with little role for local governments (IDB, 2003:57). The framework for local governance in recovery is to a large extent determined by their representation in the task forces and the way they are involved in the national level recovery planning – either directly or through their parent ministry – and how the challenges are reflected in the national damages/needs assessments and recovery strategies. In India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, local governments were involved in the assessment and formulation of strategies through the relevant ministry. In the Maldives, however, the Ministry of Atoll Development – the agency responsible for the Atoll and Island Administrations and the representative Atoll and Island Development Committees – was not at the centre of decision-making in the National Disaster Management Centre.

In the countries covered in the IDB study *Disaster Risk Management by Communities and Local Governments* there are committees for inter-institutional coordination at all levels of government. However at the local level many of these only operate on a short-term basis and only in the case of an emergency. Experiences from these countries have shown that intermediate levels of government play a crucial subsidiary role in that it is difficult for government at the national level to directly relate to the lowest levels of government (IDB, 2003:19). The local set-up has included the local governments to a varying degree in the five countries and the actual role played by local governments in recovery varies significantly among the five countries.

In **Sri Lanka**, implementation responsibilities at the local level have almost exclusively been assigned to the District and Division Secretariats – the extensions of the line ministries through the deconcentrated structure – with very limited additional financial and human resources provided to assist the Pradeshiya Sabhas and Urban/Municipal Councils (the lowest tier of local government) to reconstruct the heavily damaged local government infrastructure, which provides the basis for a large range of services that are crucial for local poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs. The Pradeshiya Sabhas and Urban/Municipal Councils and the Departments of Local Government at the Provincial level provided the rough estimates for the first needs/damages assessments and have subsequently carried out the detailed design and cost estimation for the repair work. However, they were not able to start construction since only very limited funding has been made available to them. The own source revenues and limited grants/reimbursement of expenditures have, in the past, enabled them to engage in some development activities, and gradually expand the infrastructure base. However, as the Tsunami has destroyed many years of incremental development, it cannot be rebuilt without a substantive increase in budgets, especially at a time when the tax base has been significantly reduced. The Pradeshiya Sabhas and Urban/Municipal Councils (with the support of the Provincial Local Government Departments) in the Southern Province (which was the subject of a field mission – the situation may differ in other provinces) have the technical/financial capacity which has enabled them to assess the losses and conduct design/cost-estimates for the reconstruction (and to estimate revenue lost). Funding has been provide ad hoc and earmarked (e.g. Rs. 50,000 to replace damaged light bulb in street light) and has been grossly insufficient leaving local governments to negotiate bilaterally with NGOs and donor agencies which makes it impossible for them to effectively set priorities and manage implementation of recovery. Furthermore, lack of coordination between the district/divisional secretariats, provincial councils and local government resulted in local government playing a marginal role. It has been acknowledged that this lack of coordination has led to decreased effectiveness in the recovery process. In addition to this, given the

political context in Sri Lanka, the fact that most of the local governments were controlled by the opposition may have had implications for the role that they came to play.

In **Maldives**, island level service delivery (apart from health and education delivered by central government ministries) is typically organised by the Island Chiefs with user committees involved in the production of the services – functional responsibilities are not clearly assigned. It was found that exactly this lack of clarity seems to have hampered the recovery process. This has happened in two major ways. First, the tradition of heavy reliance on user committees made it difficult to take on major reconstruction activities. The respective responsibilities for planning, implementation and management of infrastructure for the individual service is not clear and there has been a tradition for the centre to leave the responsibility for community infrastructure to the island, and for the island administration to put most of the responsibility in the hands of user committee. This can be compared to e.g. Sri Lanka where it is for example regulated that for any building with a budget of more than Rs. 500,000 (approx. US\$ 5,000), the engineers of the Provincial Local Government Department will carry out design and cost estimates, and have also taken on this work in Tsunami recovery. Second, the lack of clarity on the responsibilities leaves the Island Chiefs to decide which tasks they will take on and there is no supervision and support to fulfil a minimum set of functions. The Island Chiefs and their administrations have been the focal point for recovery and they established – as per instruction from the central government – recovery committees. In the Islands covered by the UNDP study, the committees comprised typically only 1-2 members of the Island Development Committees. The research found that in e.g. Kommandhoo, an active Island Chief was able to organise many elements of recovery but in Guraidhoo, many of the same tasks had not been taken on (e.g. the desalination plant was repaired in Kommandhoo but the desalination plant donated was for unknown reasons not installed by the bilateral donor and the Island Office has not taken action to complete this work).

The lack of a formal planning role for local governments and the management from Male of many elements of recovery has led to a feeling among the local governments that the contribution from NGOs is not well coordinated. For the assessment of losses/damages of some sectoral services delivered by central government, the Island Chiefs, and in some cases the Atoll Chief/administration, have been invited to join. In some cases, the Atoll Chiefs felt that they had been insufficiently involved. Reference was made to NGO representatives showing up and saying that “the government has given us these islands to develop”. Also, this has led to a lack of coordination of the inputs for recovery, e.g. in Kommandhoo Island, a doctor has been provided after the Tsunami but all equipment, e.g. oxygen, the laboratory, still has to be provided by a project.

In **Indonesia** district governments carry a major responsibility for delivery of public services. Also, contrary to the situation in the Maldives, district government in Aceh, due to its special autonomy has quite significant resources. However, there is a gap between existing and required local government capacity to deal with the reconstruction process despite the recovery that they have made from the impact of the Tsunami, and local government has failed to be a decisive actor in the relief and reconstruction programme. Their large budgets have not yet been focused on recovery and reconstruction needs, due to poor planning, low capacities and incidence of corruption (World Bank, 2005:xvii). This is a reflection of the fact that district governments had been struggling to discharge their decentralized functions already prior to the disaster (World Bank, 2005:33). Due to the conflict in Aceh, local government service delivery was already poor in rural areas (BAPPENAS, 2005:17), there were gaps in the legislative framework and the region-centre relationship was unclear. Merely returning local governments to the same capacity level as prior to the Tsunami will not be sufficient to address the current need for recovery in Indonesia. A World Bank assessment

undertaken six months after the Tsunami concluded that “if local governments are to play their part in the effort, if significant resources are to be entrusted to them for reconstruction, their capacities will need considerable strengthening” and it was concluded that alternative funding mechanisms will need to be used in the meantime (World Bank, 2005:xvii). It is believed that citizens through community-driven projects will themselves be able to deal with micro-level infrastructure. Large-scale infrastructure projects are being undertaken by the larger donors. A gap has however become evident as regards to meso-level infrastructure, e.g. district-level roads, dykes, sewerage and water-supply – normally the preserve of local government (World Bank, 2005:23). The district governments in both Aceh and Nias do not have the capacity for these tasks – and due to factors mentioned above (e.g., low capacity and poor control mechanisms) it is unlikely that they would be able to carry out these tasks even if the necessary funds were made available (World Bank, 2005:xviii).

Following the Tsunami disaster a team led by the National Planning Development Board (BAPPENAS) formulated a Master Plan for the recovery of Aceh and Nias, involving a wide range of stakeholders in the process – including line ministries and local government representatives. Reflecting the weakness of local governments in the Tsunami stricken areas, the Master Plan provided for the establishment of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR). However, the BRR has a coordinating, rather than implementing, role – with its core function being to match resources with priority needs. As part of its initial strategy the BRR focused on developing the capacity of local governments to manage their affairs and deliver effective services – reflecting the weakness of local governments discussed above. In addition to this the BRR also focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the relationship between central government agencies and local governments (World Bank, 2005:20-21).

Thailand, having a rather advanced system for devolved service delivery, has coped with the tasks in quite a different manner. Unlike in Maldives and Sri Lanka, the local governments quickly received funding to start recovery of infrastructure and services. In some exceptional cases funding was available from own resources (e.g. the Phuket Municipal Council approved THB 20 million (approx. US\$ 500,000) as immediate additional funding from the council’s own coffers the day after the disaster). For smaller local government organizations, i.e. the Tambon Administrative Organizations, funding was provided by the central government; The Tambon Administrative Organisations and Municipalities in Thailand had by April received approximately THB 1.45 billion (approximately US\$ 36 million) as unconditional grants compensating for lost tax revenues and ear-marked funds allocated for specific recovery projects proposed. The grants provided to the local government organizations were of two types. The first is the grant for local government organizations which proposed projects for reconstruction of public infrastructure. This grant totals THB 1.2 billion (approximately US\$ 30 million), covering 278 projects. The second type of grant is intended to compensate for estimated loss in income of affected local governments for the 2005 budget year. This has amounted to THB 240 million (approximately US\$ 6 million). Under this income compensation grant there are three types of funding: (i) grants for estimated loss in tax revenue (not all local government organizations have received these grants); (ii) grants that are proportional to the population size of each local government unit; and (iii) a fixed grant of approximately US\$ 5,700 for each of the affected local government organizations.

Distribution of grants to local government organizations in Thailand

Grant for public works project	Grant to compensate for loss of income		
	Grant for compensation of loss in tax revenue (received by 43 out of 74 LGOs)	Grant Proportional to Population Size (74 LGOs)	Fixed Grant for LGOs in Tsunami-affected Provinces (74 LGOs)
US\$ 30 million	US\$ 5,4 million	US\$ 180,000	US\$ 420,000
Total: US\$ 6 million			

However, although recovery in Thailand went relatively fast with respect to the basic local government infrastructure and services, e.g. sewage and drinking water systems were in many places re-established within weeks after the Tsunami, there remain major challenges in two main areas. First is the extent to which local government organizations ensure a broad public debate on the direction of post-disaster development and participation and protection of the rights of individuals/groups, particularly vulnerable groups, such as the sea gypsies and traditional fisher folk communities (e.g. in Phuket and Phang Nga where powerful interests are backing a different use of the beach front with less room for e.g. sea gypsies and small entrepreneurs in the hotel and bar business) – see further below. Secondly, most local government organizations still lack experiences in participatory strategic long-term planning for the overall recovery process, e.g. income generation, beyond the immediate infrastructure reconstruction.

In **India** the Ministry of Home Affairs was initially designated as the nodal point for coordinating relief in the Tsunami affected areas. In the initial stage funds (US\$ 627.81 million) were allocated from the National Calamity Contingency Fund. State governments were also able to disburse financial assistance to those affected by the disaster. After the initial relief effort, the government focused on the preparation of a comprehensive framework for rehabilitation and reconstruction coordinated by the National Planning Commission (ADB, United Nations and World Bank, 2005:4). Despite the swift action of the national government in response to the Tsunami, some elected local government representatives have felt that they “were totally ignored by government agencies in managing the crisis” (ISS, 2005) despite being envisaged by the Constitution as the institutions of self-government. This was a result of the fact that this is not one of the responsibilities of local governments in the third tier. As the main responsibility for relief and rehabilitation has been placed with State Governments and Union Territory Administrations, a call has also been made for the third tier of government, i.e. the Panchayats and Municipalities to be involved as they are likely to have the local information and knowledge that is crucial to ensure sustainable recovery.¹⁰

4.2 What happened to the principles for good local governance?

During the United Nations Regional Workshop on Lessons Learned and Best Practice in the Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami held in Medan, Indonesia 13-14 June 2005, the concern was raised that communities had not been consistently consulted on aspects of relief and recovery work and their involvement in needs assessment, planning and implementation of emergency assistance programmes was not prioritized (2005:2). Prior to the regional workshop workshops were also held in four of the Tsunami-affected countries (Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand). Participants in the Maldives and Indonesia workshops found

¹⁰ For further information/discussion on the possible role of the Panchayati Raj in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction see: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res19010603.pdf>.

that disaster and damage assessments had been carried out without the involvement of affected communities (GOM/UN, 2005:7 and GOI/UN, 2005:3). In Indonesia it was said that this in some cases had led to aid being delivered without actual needs being taken into account, leading to resources being wasted (GOI/UN, 2005:3-4). Transparency and access to information are crucial elements of the recovery process. Unclear delivery processes and lack of information lead to distrust of local government amongst the intended beneficiaries and a feeling that they are not being included in the decision making process (Fidalgo et al, 2005:45).

The lowest tiers of government are in a unique position to ensure that beneficiaries participate in a meaningful way in the recovery programme given their proximity to their constituents. One sector where the participation of the Tsunami affected people is crucial is housing. In order to ensure that the rebuilding of houses in Aceh will follow a community-driven approach, committees for rehabilitation and reconstruction will be established at sub-district and village level based on the lowest government jurisdiction. Moreover communities themselves will be responsible for community mapping, action plans, construction management, etc (World Bank, 2005:62). In fact one of the main principles of the Indonesian Master Plan is that rehabilitation and reconstruction be “community-oriented, participatory as well as sustainable” reflecting the belief that communities themselves have a major role to play in the recovery process (World Bank, 2005:20).

In the Maldives and Thailand lessons learned indicated that greater attention needs to be paid to the protection of vulnerable groups during future disasters (GOM/UN, 2005:7 and GOT/UN, 2005:4-5). The importance of paying greater attention to the poor and other vulnerable groups is evident in that they are the ones most vulnerable to the affects of and therefore suffer most of all from natural disasters. The post-disaster recovery phase also holds the possibility of changing the role/situation of vulnerable groups in the affected areas. An example of this comes out of the experiences from the post-disaster recovery phase in Mozambique following the 2001 floods. Community interviews conducted indicated that gender relations had changed with women being given a more prominent role in the communities – partly as a result of external agencies recognition of the role of women (Fidalgo et al., 2005:54). This opportunity was also acknowledged in the World Bank assessment of Aceh and Nias (2005:19). In Sri Lanka Grievance Committees established prior to the Tsunami at the District Secretariat level have served the purpose of holding local as well as central government to account, thereby providing individuals to seek recourse.

In addition to the need for broader direct participation and consultation, the experiences from the first months of recovery also suggests that there is a need to focus on the functioning of the representative institutions (the councils) vis-à-vis the administration, including issues of accountability, and on the internal functioning of the councils. In for example the Maldives, there was only a limited attempt to integrate the Island Development Committees (the appointed/elected representative bodies) in the recovery effort (e.g. by informing the committees systematically on recovery effort and presenting plans for approval). Also, reacting to a request from Male, the Atoll Chiefs requested the formation of a Task Force for Tsunami recovery at island level. No specific requirements for the composition were provided. The members in the case studies have been selected from among government staff and other citizens considered having the required organisational capacity. In Guraidhoo Island, two out of twenty-five members were members of the Island Development Committees. The second

point has been illustrated in Thailand where the directly elected heads of the councils in the words of critics have sidelined other members of the councils.¹¹

Finally, the issue of financial accountability has been an issue of concern. Whereas local governments are often held to be less susceptible to corrupt practices than central governments due primarily to stronger mechanisms for downwards accountability, there exist no a priori unqualified verdict in favour of decentralized governance (see e.g. Fjeldstad 2003 for an overview of the literature on decentralization and corruption). The same would apply to a context of disaster recovery. However, the need to strengthen financial accountability has been highlighted, including in cases where funding is administered by local governments (e.g. in Indonesia – see World Bank 2005; p. 36).

5. UNDP and donor assistance

Past experiences have shown that while technical cooperation has proved effective in ‘getting the job done’ it has been less effective at developing local institutions or strengthening local capacities. Responding to the immense destruction and human suffering which followed in the wake of the Tsunami there was an unprecedented response on the part of the international community. Support was offered to the affected countries and funds were pledged bilaterally as well as through the multilateral donor agencies including the ADB, UNDP and the wider UN-system and the World Bank. In the initial stages much of the support was directed at providing relief in order to meet the immediate needs.

Indonesia, which was the most severely impacted country by the Tsunami consequently also has the largest UNDP programme. The programme covers (i) damage and loss assessment on local governance (co-led with the World Bank); (ii) recovery assessment and planning – co-leading the governance related task force (including financial management); (iii) provision of support for local governance – including the development of a project together with the World Bank that aims at filling the capacity gap by placing advisors in various local governance institutions as well as developing the capacity of local institutions in the longer term; and (iv) an overall fund management strategy for reconstruction in Aceh together with the World Bank and developing a strategy for BRR (together with McKinsey).¹² A case study looking at the experiences of state institution-building in Timor-Leste was considered a useful model for guiding assistance in meeting capacity development needs in three phases in Indonesia: (i) the stabilization phase – focusing on the building of individual capacity; (ii) the building phase – focusing on individual as well as institutional capacity development through combination of broader modalities; and (iii) the consolidation phase – focusing on a series of cross-institution and institution specific programmes to address both individual and institutional capacity development (Nakamura, 2004:15-32)¹³.

In **Thailand** UNDP plays a crucial role in supporting the government’s longer-term Tsunami recovery and rehabilitation efforts. It focuses its support through national and local institutions, to vulnerable groups for long-term recovery efforts and inclusive governance, e.g. to sea gypsy and Muslim communities. UNDP also provides support to small local government organizations (Tambon Administrative Organizations) in preparing strategic participatory

¹¹ For further discussion on this see UNDP Human Development Viewpoint on *Presidentialism in Decentralized Governance: More Local Leadership But At What Costs* (HDV no. 65).

¹² Information on UNDP support to Indonesia; study on local governance and tsunami recovery undertaken by Toshihiro Nakamura (UNDP Indonesia).

¹³ For an in-depth description of the model on capacity development and state institution building see http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs05/Toshi_final.pdf.

recovery plans and implementing some pilot activities. UNDP's support is focused in four areas: (i) coordination; (ii) community-based livelihood recovery – focusing on ensuring the participation and rights of vulnerable groups; (iii) environmental rehabilitation; and (iv) disaster preparedness and mitigation.

In **India** support to post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation has to a certain extent followed a similar pattern to that in Thailand. Again this is a reflection of the governments own capacity and resources to meet the needs at the local level. The Planning Commission, in preparing a comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation has called on the UN-system as well as the international financial institutions to provide assistance specifically in the areas of: (i) sustainable livelihoods; (ii) disaster management and risk reduction; and (iii) infrastructure. In response to this the UN Country Team has identified four areas of support in which it will work: (i) moving from post-disaster relief to recovery; (ii) restoring livelihoods and upgrading infrastructure; (iii) prospective risk reduction; and (iv) policy support and coordination. UNDP has also initiated activities in the area of psychological support as well as supported the coordination of the governments efforts through drawing upon the resources of the already running Disaster Risk Management Programme (UNCT, 2005:17-18).

In **Sri Lanka** UNDP, looking beyond the immediate recovery phase, has developed a programme for Capacity Development for Recovery Programme (CADREP). The focus of the programme is on deconcentrated bodies, local governance and the Pradeshiya Sabhas. However, based on the policy decision of the government to focus on the deconcentrated bodies in the immediate recovery phase, the project will work with the local structures in the second phase. In reflecting the challenges outlined in this paper, the intention is to provide funding (through a proposed Local Recovery Fund) to Pradeshiya Sabhas and Urban/Municipal Councils and a major effort is to be made to develop their capacity. UNDP is also supporting the Disaster-Relief Monitoring Unit of the National Human Rights Commission which has been conducting 'People's Consultations' in collaboration with local universities in an effort to increase participation in the recovery process.

In the **Maldives** UNDP has provided support for community development and participatory processes within the context of the already existing Atoll Development Programme. Policy support has also been given for further development of local democracy through functioning Island and Atoll Development Committees as well as administrative and fiscal decentralization intended to address the challenges in the post disaster context. An innovative approach has been the Adopt-An-Island initiative, developed by UNDP Maldives, which supports the government with its Tsunami recovery work in three key sectors: (i) shelter reconstruction; (ii) infrastructure rehabilitation; and (iii) restoration of livelihoods. The objective of Adopt-An-Island is to generate public and private sector support – both financial and in-kind – to sustain the post-Tsunami recovery effort in Maldives.

6. Conclusions and Emerging Principles

6.1 Conclusions

The Tsunami has had a major impact on local government service delivery but has, across all affected areas (with the exception of Aceh which saw a significant reduction in an already low capacity of local government), not significantly changed the institutional capacity of local government in place after the immediate recovery phase. The disaster did lead to casualties among local government staff but the vast majority of staff and elected representatives

survived the disaster and have resumed their functions. Whereas a limited number of offices were completely destroyed and many office buildings affected, most remained functional. The greatest damage was sustained to infrastructure for service delivery and other public infrastructure under the responsibility of the local governments – service infrastructure often of crucial importance to attaining the targets set by the MDGs.

As discussed above, the macroeconomic impact of the Tsunami has been relatively limited. Yet the destruction of service delivery infrastructure poses a major challenge as the economic and social impacts of the Tsunami on the affected areas have been enormous.¹⁴ It is thus crucial that local governments, with the support of national government and donors, quickly re-establish the infrastructure that was destroyed. Therein lies a trade-off between a quick response to urgent needs and a carefully planned reconstruction process that allows for consultation, participation and capacity-building. One of the shortcomings in the recovery process was a lack of consultation with the affected communities, in particular of the poor and disadvantaged, in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of relief, recovery and rehabilitation efforts. Lack of consultation and participation has in some cases led to resources being used in an inefficient manner. There is a further conflict between the desire to 'return to normal' and 'building better, i.e. making improvements to the previously existing institutions and infrastructure.

It is clear that local institutions/organizations in the countries studied have had varying success in addressing the challenge of rebuilding infrastructure for service delivery. It is however also clear that lack of capacity on the part of local governments to meet these challenges are not solely a result of the Tsunami, as they were generally able to return to a level of functioning similar to that before the disaster struck. Rather it is a reflection of the fact that local governments in some of the countries lacked capacity and resources already prior to the disaster.

The ability of local governments to play an effective role in recovery has also largely been determined by the form of decentralization adopted, administrative as well as financial, as well as the general institutional and legislative framework. Deconcentrated local government in Sri Lanka does not appear to have been equipped with the capacity and resources needed to play an effective role in the recovery process whereas devolved local government in Thailand, due to greater capacity and in particular access to adequate resources was more able to respond. However the performance of local government in Sri Lanka should be seen in light that the local government system in Sri Lanka had a number of weaknesses prior to the Tsunami. It should however be noted that even when local governments are given the mandate as well as the necessary funds they may still not be able to play an effective role if they do not have the necessary capacity – as was the case in Aceh and Nias. Again, it should be acknowledged that the fact that both Aceh and Sri Lanka were in conflict or in ongoing post conflict recovery process. It can be assumed that will also have impacted on the ability of local governments to respond to the disaster.

Another factor impacting on the ability of local government to play an effective role in the recovery is to the extent that it was involved by national government in the planning, design and execution of relief and recovery efforts. As mentioned above e.g. involvement of local government in India was lacking in the early stages. When national bodies are set up to manage the recovery process, local governments need to be represented since they are the institutions responsible for carrying out many post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction functions. The importance of local governments is further emphasized by the fact that they

¹⁴ E.g. in Aceh the Tsunami had a significant impact totaling 97 percent of the provincial GDP.

are likely to be the institutions which are best placed to assess the needs and ensure the participation of the affected communities. It must however be reiterated that this is dependent on the capacity to undertake these tasks existing in local government. Involving them in planning and implementation as well as budgeting the recovery proves to be an effective means of building their capacities but in the cases where there is virtually no capacity it may initially be necessary to seek alternative channels until capacity has been built.

As such the major needs for assistance of local governments are in recovery of infrastructure and services. More donor and government funding would have to be provided, complemented by support for capacity development if this is to be achieved. Meeting these needs is essentially a continuation, and possibly scaling up of past efforts by UNDP in this area. Further areas in which local governments will have an important role to play in the recovery process and where they are also likely to require support is in reviving the local economy and, through regulating and coordinating, ensuring that the issue of land and property rights is dealt with in an equitable and timely manner.

UNDP should consider its role in providing assistance to local governments, in particular the timing and modalities of assistance to local government. UNDP should provide assistance to local governments already at the outset. If assistance is not given to local governments immediately they are likely to be left without any assistance at all during the initial recovery phase, which is likely to have a negative impact on the way reconstruction is carried out. At the initial stage the immediate service delivery could be undertaken by other UN agencies. Currently UNDP works primarily with central government to formulate projects with local governments. But following the above argument and in order to allow for rapid responses and decisions in post disaster situations UNDP should be able to work directly with local government.

Lessons from UNDP's support to local governance to date also indicate that there is a need to balance community development and support to local governance. A large proportion of support directed at local institutions has focused on capacity development. This has also been the case for UNDP. However, UNDP needs to have a clearer strategy on how to link capacity development with support to local governance. This would include provision of grants when needed in order to allow local governments themselves to set priorities and invest in the recovery of their infrastructure. Experience indicates that allowing local governments to take part in the planning, budgeting and implementation of the rehabilitation and recovery phase is an effective tool in raising their capacity. A further lesson for UNDP is that for support to local governance to be most effective it must be provided in a timely manner. However, this was not always the case. In e.g. Sri Lanka support to local government is coming at a very late stage.

6.2 Emerging principles

This study and the wider experiences and lessons learned on post-disaster recovery and the role of local governance reveals a number of emerging principles:

- The ability of local governments to play an effective part in the recovery effort will in large part depend on their capacity prior to a disaster.
- It is crucial to understand the legal and institutional framework for decentralization as this is likely to be an important factor in determining the effectiveness of local government in the post-disaster recovery phase.
- In order for local governments to be effective players in the recovery process they must have adequate financial resources in addition to capacity.

- Tax bases are typically reduced significantly due to the impact of the disaster on the local economy and reduction of user charges etc. from damaged local government infrastructure and compensatory mechanisms should be established as early as possible.
- Although there is a trade-off between a quick response to urgent needs and a carefully planned reconstruction process that allow for consultation, participation and capacity development it is necessary to opt for the latter in order to ensure the effective use of resources, to ensure that recovery mirrors the actual demands of the affected communities and to develop capacity in the long term.
- Local government should be involved in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of the recovery process. Involving local governments at all stages of the process is also an effective way to develop capacity.
- Local governments are likely to be the best placed to assess the needs of the affected communities.
- Local governments have a crucial role to play, through coordination and facilitation of participatory processes, in ensuring that the issue of land and property rights is dealt with in an equitable and timely manner. Whereas land management might not be a devolved responsibility of local governments but the elected representations can play an important role as a partner in solving problems related to e.g. ownership and use of land.
- It is crucial to involve communities in the recovery process at all stages. Communities are likely to be the most efficient in restoring some micro-infrastructure. Furthermore attention should be given to building community-based disaster preparedness.
- In planning for post-disaster recovery attention should be paid to the opportunity to promote issues such as gender equality, conflict resolution and human rights.
- There is an urgent need to ensure UN and donor support for early recovery of local governance institutions as well as reconstruction of the infrastructure of local governments which will allow them to re-establish delivery of economic and social services.

6.3 Areas for additional research

It is clear from this study that the specific legislative and institutional context of the countries covered in this study has had a major influence on the role that local government has come to play in the recovery phase. Although this study has attempted to do justice to the varying arrangements of decentralization in the different countries it does not have the scope to carry out a full analysis. Given the fact that the Tsunami simultaneously impacted on several countries with differing arrangements for decentralization, it provides an opening for comparative research. Thus it would be merited to undertake additional in-depth case studies in the five countries already included in this study, i.e. India, Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In addition to revisiting the institutional and legislative frameworks and the impact that they have had on the ability of local governments to play an effective role in the post-disaster recovery phase additional areas of research could include:

- The functioning of the district/local level recovery committees and the role of local governments;

- The possibility of developing a standardized methodology to assess the damages / loses of natural disasters on governance institutions (the basis of which could be the methodology developed by UNDP Indonesia)¹⁵.
- The role of local government in protecting and promoting human rights in a post-disaster context;
- The relationship between local governments and national and local-level task forces;
- The financing of local governance responses to Tsunami recovery;
- The role of user committees; and
- The role played by communities in the recovery process.

¹⁵ For further information on this please contact toshihiro.nakamura@undp.org.

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