



Analysis of emergency evaluations - a discussion paper

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“...people in need require rapid help on the ground. But an emergency...does not occur in a social, economic or political vacuum, and persistent vulnerability is a fact of life for many of the people assisted in its wake. Disasters exacerbate a country’s inequities, but they rarely create them. Although these inequities may be beyond agencies’ direct control, this does not make advocating change any less important”

NGO responses to Hurricane Mitch: evaluations for accountability and learning

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1. Background

This analysis considers reports on emergency interventions in which Concern has been involved over the last ten years. It has been carried out to identify common issues arising from the emergency responses and to identify lessons which need to be learned if we are to establish more effective interventions and break the perception that we repeatedly make the same mistakes when responding to emergencies.

In so doing, it is hoped that this report will contribute to the consolidation and dissemination of the knowledge acquired from recent emergencies, and so increase institutional memory.

The principle emergencies covered in this analysis are:

Emergency feeding programme, Kosti, Sudan	1990-1991
Bangladesh cyclone,	1991
Somalia	1992-1993
Great Lakes programmes	1994-1995
Bangladesh floods	1998
South Sudan	1998
Hurricane Mitch	1998
Kosovo	1999
Turkish earthquake	1999
Orissa floods	1999
Mozambique floods	2000
Gujarat earthquake	2001

A full list of the reports which have been reviewed is attached as an annex.

Many of the more recent evaluations have been conducted by external bodies, particularly the DEC which is required to conduct a review following each of its appeals. This analysis suggests that failing to conduct our own evaluations represents a lost opportunity. The better of the DEC evaluations (and they are uneven) offer a broad overview of the wider issues, and include current academic thinking on emergency preparedness and response, but tend not to deal in great detail with the nature or quality of the response of individual organisations. To rely solely on such evaluations means that we fail to analyse in detail the strengths and weaknesses of our own intervention.

- *It is recommended that while the broader evaluations offer a useful context, there is a clear need for Concern to conduct its own evaluations in order to learn from experience.*

Evaluations which are not specific to Concern leave open the possibility for their recommendations to be ignored as irrelevant to the organisation. The papers prepared following the Great Lakes 'wash up' and the Albania intervention suggest that Concern-specific reports prepared by senior staff working within the organisation have a better chance of making a difference than the broader brush donor evaluations or those prepared by more junior staff.

The diversity of evaluations, and the inconsistency of their criteria for judging interventions, means that it is not possible to develop an evaluation framework

comparable to that used in the *Report on the analysis of external evaluations submitted to Council in 1998 and 1999* of August 2000. The fact that so few of the emergency evaluations offer an in-depth analysis of Concern's intervention means that it is also impossible to discern issues specifically related to the organisation's programme responses from the inter-agency evaluations.

There are, however, several areas of common concern which emerge from the analysis which bear further consideration.

Given the period of time covered in this review, attempts have been made to recognise the fact that progress has been made and to identify issues that are current, rather than those raised in the earlier evaluations, which have already been dealt with.

2. The broader brush issues

2.1 Definitions

The terminology used around emergencies tends to be loosely defined with certain terms and phrases often being seen as interchangeable. For the purposes of this paper, the following definitions are being used – inevitably, there is a considerable level of inter-connectedness between these terms:

Types

Complex

The term *complex* is generally seen as being synonymous with conflict, but it can be argued that all emergencies are, in fact, complex. For this reason, we will use the term *conflict-based* to describe those emergencies caused by war – whether civil or international. *Conflict-based* emergencies tend to be prolonged, characterised by the absence of an accepted central government, and there are often issues of *access* associated with them.

Recent *conflict-based* emergencies range from Somalia to Sierra Leone and beyond. There is an increasing element of *protection* of local populations in the response of organisations to *conflict-based* emergencies, with human rights monitoring and promotion becoming more and more important.

As has been shown by the case of North Korea, it is possible to have a *complex* emergency that is not *conflict-based*.

Man made

Man made emergencies may be seen to fall into two distinct categories – those that are conflict based and those resulting from accidents such as that at Chernobyl.

However, man's actions may create conditions whereby the impact of natural disasters are amplified – poor construction standards will result in greater damage in the event of an earthquake; deforestation of slopes may increase the chances of mud slides; poor farming practises may result in reduced yields and so increase the chances of food insecurity, etc.

Natural disaster

Those emergencies caused by natural events or 'acts of God'. They may be sudden (such as those caused by earthquakes) or slower in their onset (such as those that sometimes occur in the event of flooding).

cf. the point above as to the potential for human activity to accentuate the impact of natural disasters.

Political

Political emergencies may be said to occur when government policies are such that a large number of people are denied access to essential services (health, water, food, shelter, etc) such that there is a serious threat to their lives.

An example of this would be North Korea.

Speed

Slow onset

Slow onset emergencies are those which build up over time, although the time scales for this build up may be seen to vary according to the cause of the emergency. Thus, *famines* tend to be based on several years of gradually deteriorating food security, while *floods* may result from steadily rising water levels over a number of weeks.

Sudden

Sudden onset emergencies can be described as occurring when there are no prior indicators that the event will take place. This may cover either natural emergencies - such as those caused by earthquakes (Gujarat and El Salvador) hurricanes (Hurricane Mitch affected many South American countries) or conflict - or man-made emergencies such as the outflow of refugees into Zaire and Tanzania following the genocide in Rwanda.

Duration

Acute

Acute emergencies may be natural or man made and though they tend to be of short duration, there is a threat to the lives of a sizeable number of people.

The floods in Mozambique were relatively slow in their onset, but their impact was acute. Medical emergencies, such as those resulting from an outbreak of meningitis, cholera, Ebola, etc may all be seen as acute emergencies.

Chronic

Chronic emergencies are those emergencies which persist without the root causes being addressed.

Examples of this are varied but may be seen in the chronic food insecurities of Ethiopia in the '80s, or the ongoing conflict-based emergencies in Angola and south Sudan, which may be said to be *chronic conflict-based emergencies*.

Distinct from the issue of the timing and types of emergencies are the following:

Humanitarianism

Traditionally, humanitarianism has been defined by the degree to which agencies are able to meet the four basic principles of the Red Cross – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

Summarised, these principles may be seen to give rise to the *humanitarian imperative* – to save lives and reduce suffering.

This classical view of humanitarianism holds that all other factors, including the possibility that the intervention may have negative repercussions, have to be subjugated to the delivery of relief to those in need.

The principle of impartiality also precludes agencies from speaking out against what they witness when responding to emergencies.

Research conducted by Hugo Slim and Isobel McConnan (*A Swiss Prince...*) has highlighted the extent to which the DEC agencies actually comply with the traditional view of humanitarianism.

Slim and McConnan's paper suggests that the primary concern for most DEC agencies is the elimination of poverty and that they have adopted a more robust interpretation of humanitarianism than that articulated in the Code of Conduct to which they are all signatories. Specifically, the DEC agencies feel that articles dealing with the humanitarian imperative (Article 1) and independence (Article 4) do not go far enough in allowing them to address the needs of their target groups.

The desire to follow a model of intervention, based on human rights, designed to enhance the protection of civilian populations has resulted in the evolution of *new humanitarianism*.

Under the terms of this *new humanitarianism*, greater efforts are made to identify and challenge the underlying causes of poverty – including the causes of conflict, with *advocacy* becoming an increasingly common tool in this struggle. Programmatically, the focus on *saving lives* is expanded to include the wider objective of *protecting livelihoods*.

Mitigation

The intended outcome of mitigation programming is to limit the impact of future emergencies. The programme activities focus on assisting local communities to be better prepared to deal with the emergency and thus better able to bounce back and recover from its impact.

Preparedness

Emergency preparedness activities centre on the development of Concern's institutional capacity to respond to emergencies. Central to this is our *capacity to respond*. To date this has focused on the development of more effective ways of ensuring that our systems, stores and staff are better able to respond effectively to new emergencies.

Scale

There is often an issue of *scale* associated with emergencies – generally speaking, for an international response to be raised for a new emergency, it has to be one which has affected thousands of people. While Concern has an obligation to respond to emergencies in those countries in which it is working, very localised emergencies affecting a small number of people in a very confined area are unlikely to precipitate an international response. Factors such as the number of people affected and the degree to which they are affected will be the key determinants governing engagement.

It has been suggested that there is a growing threshold of human suffering which is now considered ‘acceptable’ in crises – that the bar is constantly being raised to higher levels before donors are willing to respond.

The role of donors and the media in emergency responses is crucial. The increasing number of ‘forgotten emergencies’ and the often belated nature of funding means that the emphasis is increasingly on treating the symptoms rather than the causes – too little too late for many people. The media are increasingly being seen as the determinants of which emergencies are focused upon and given adequate coverage and, consequently, adequate funding.

Mark Bradbury has coined the term ‘the normalisation of crisis’ to convey his belief that over the past decade there has been a gradual acceptance by the international community of higher levels of vulnerability, malnutrition and morbidity and that, generally speaking, large-scale suffering is often no longer sufficient to trigger an urgent humanitarian response. (cf. Hendrickson)

The other aspect of *scale* that emerges from the evaluations is that of trying to do too much with limited resources, with the result that little is done well. The Great Lakes ‘wash up’ suggests that a smaller, well-focussed and adequately supported response might have achieved more than the larger, overstretched and under-supported one that was implemented.

Access

Access is an issue in terms of our ability to respond. Of itself, it does not define an emergency, although problems of access may exacerbate it.

2.2 Stages of emergencies

One of the issues identified in many of the evaluations is that especially in an acute emergency, and even in a chronic one, the situation on the ground may change quite quickly. Interventions have to change with it – in floods or earthquakes, search and rescue activities tend to last for only a few days and take most of the attention, but it is debatable whether this is an area in which NGOs are well suited to intervene. Fairly quickly, the focus of activity switches though to stabilisation and then into rehabilitation.

Initial programmatic decisions may have to be taken quickly, but after the initial response, there is a need to be more consultative – to know what assistance people need and to deliver it in a manner that allows for consultation and the explanation of actions.

An additional concern identified by the evaluation reports is the delay that occurs in responding to emergencies which has meant that on occasions relief items have arrived at a time when the need for them has passed. Several reports, particularly the DEC reports on the Orissa floods and the Gujarat earthquake, emphasise a concern for the fact that the ‘relief phase’ of an emergency response has been prolonged by the fact that NGOs have focused more on clearing their own warehouses than on seeking a deeper understanding of the varied and changing needs of the intended beneficiaries. Sustaining the initial phase of a relief intervention longer than is absolutely necessary may, it is argued, actually retard the recovery process and create dependency.

Ultimately, the people to whom we should be accountable for the achievements made in our interventions are the beneficiaries, although in most instances we end up being accountable only to the donors for what we have done.

- *In responding to the originally identified needs, we should not assume that these are constant. We need to ensure that we increase our knowledge and understanding of the beneficiaries' needs and of the impact of the interventions that we are making, and that we are responsive to changes that develop.*

Several evaluations are critical of the fact that the international community appears to lack the political will to address the underlying causes of emergencies. It is argued that the shift to rehabilitation programming is often at the instigation of donors who have refused to acknowledge or address the underlying political problems that caused the emergency in the first place. By forcing this process on people, it is argued that those who are most in need of relief assistance may become dependent on unsustainable coping mechanisms and that in chronic emergencies their condition will decline year by year as a result. This position is contrary to the argument that the early and adequate delivery of support would avoid the development of dependency on aid and ensure that people were not forced to rely on unsustainable adaptive mechanisms.

Interestingly, Harragin and Chol argue that rather than creating dependency, the delivery of aid to south Sudan in 1998 was, in all probability, seen by the beneficiaries as an unreliable interim mechanism that could be accessed only in the short term.

2.3 Ways of working

The ways in which we can respond to emergencies fall into two main categories:

- *direct implementation* – we do the work ourselves with Concern staff.
- *indirect implementation* – we work through local partners.

Attendant upon indirect implementation is the issue of the ability of local government or organisations to sufficiently increase their capacity to be able to meet the increased needs. In those areas where local capacity is weak or limited, the few strong elements may become overloaded with work and expectations.

Local capacity varies with time and location. In the least developed countries capacity may be limited regardless of the stage of the emergency, whereas in more developed countries it may be affected in the initial phase of the emergency but then quickly recover, with local organisations playing an increasingly important role in the response.

There is also an important issue in terms of the relationship that we seek to establish with these local partners – are we sub-contracting the work that we want done by employing a local partner to carry it out, or are we facilitating the local partner to do the work that they feel needs to be done ?

Given the recent establishment of Alliance 2015, there is the obvious option of working through or with our Alliance partners. It is interesting then that the DEC evaluation of Kosovo states the following on such emergency interventions:

*There is an increasing trend for DEC agencies to work through international networks for implementation. This can be positive...but it also means that agencies need to spend increasing amounts of time on internal rather than external coordination. **And in the pressure of a major high profile international emergency, network partners tend to break ranks and go bilateral as some did in the Kosovo emergency.***

(Pxxvi, Volume I, Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Kosovo appeal funds)

Although potentially a third way of working, it is more likely that *advocacy* would be one strategy adopted in responding to the needs that have been identified. Advocacy interventions may be made directly or indirectly.

2.4 The relief/development continuum/contiguuum

In the event of an emergency occurring in an area in which organisations already have development programmes established, there is often a debate as to the extent to which the emergency response should impinge upon the ongoing development programme. In situations such as that which existed in south Sudan in 1998, or in Honduras following Hurricane Mitch, the emergency is so acute that the developmental programmes are almost entirely secondary to the needs and interests of the intended beneficiaries, but it is not always the case that an acute emergency in some areas of the country necessitates the suspension of development activities in all areas of operation within that country. An example of this would have been seen in Ethiopia in 2000 when the food insecurity in Wolayta necessitated a considerable nutritional response without having significant impact on the urban programmes or those in the north of the country.

While it may not always be possible to run development and emergency programmes contiguously, it may be possible to ensure that staff from development programmes are deployed to an emergency, using their local knowledge of the area and their assessment skills to ensure appropriate programming and the effective targeting of inputs.

The 'normalisation of crisis' has, in some instances, resulted in the premature declaration that an emergency is over, so justifying reductions in acute relief aid and a rapid transition to more 'developmental' models of relief. This has long been the case in locations such as south Sudan where agencies have, essentially, been managing developmental programmes in a chronic complex emergency situation, responding to the periodic emergencies and then reverting to developmental programmes. Ultimately though, the idea of being able to make the transition from an emergency to a development programme without addressing the underlying political causes of the emergency is fanciful.

The apparent disengagement of the international community from complex regional emergencies has left agencies with ever greater responsibilities. At the same time, the availability of funding for addressing these issues is becoming ever more uncertain.

2.5 'Creating dependency', 'doing no harm' and 'keeping the bright side out'

In his paper *International humanitarianism's engagement with civil war in the 1990s: a glance at evolving practice and theory*, prepared for ActionAid UK in December 1997, Hugo Slim refers to the growing number of academics and journalists intent on focusing on the “dark side” of humanitarian relief – i.e. the negative impacts which result from the humanitarian community’s interventions. Slim argues that agencies need to show the “bright side” of interventions by showing the *impact* of what we do and that we need something more sophisticated than lists of the number of blankets that have been delivered.

- *We need to ensure that impact indicators for our work are established at the outset of the intervention and that we know what we are trying to **achieve** rather than just what we are trying to **do**.*

Mary Anderson’s reworking of Hippocratic principles to form the basis of the ‘do no harm’ theory has found considerable acceptance among agencies and has helped to focus attention on the need to deliver aid in a way that does not exacerbate existing tensions. However, the perception that aid necessarily fuels conflict is one that needs closer examination. In some situations, this would appear to have been the case: in his paper *Responding to conflict in Africa*, Mark Bowden has suggested that at the height of the international community’s response to the crises in Somalia and Zaire, aid agencies became an important source of income in resource-starved environments. He argues that it is now generally accepted that the presence of so many agencies prolonged and exacerbated the conflicts, but that those agencies that have remained active in the country over the long term have learned from this experience and moved away from resource-driven interventions.

The relative importance of aid to local war economies has also to be put into perspective. In the late 90’s, aid to Afghanistan was in the order of ten million dollars a year, “while the total street value of heroin grown in the country and sold in the UK is worth some fifteen billion dollars”. (Hendrickson)

While aid may cause localised unrest, this must be considered against the benefits that it can bring. The suggestion that aid sustains war and that without aid, wars would peter out does not seem to be borne out by precedence – the underlying causes can often be considered to fall within the following categories: combatants’ desire for power and wealth, the continuing impact of colonialism, the more recent impact of structural adjustment and external debt, and the ready availability of weapons.

Aid may occur in areas where there is conflict, but it does not cause it other than, possibly, on a local scale where assets are seized. Humanitarian assistance can address some basic needs but does not prevent violence or address the underlying causes of it.

Similarly, the argument that aid leads to dependency has to be placed in a wider context. Between 1994 and 1998, it is estimated that aid made up 10% of international development assistance. The amount of money available for relief interventions is derisory when set against the total needs - in most emergency situations, needs far surpass the support that is available.

There is, however, an issue about how that money is targeted. For example, donors funding for the 1999 UN appeal for Kosovo amounted to US\$207 per person, while the UN appeal in the same year for Sierra Leone raised US\$16 and for the Democratic

Republic of Congo US\$8. (P77, Volume I, *Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Kosovo appeal funds*).

The level of funding raised by the DEC for the flooding in Mozambique in 2000 was disproportionate to previous appeals of this nature:

Four of the six appeals made since the reform of the DEC in the mid 90's have been for flood and storm events. Three of these have been for tropical cyclone related events (Central America, Orissa and Mozambique). In terms of the size of the population affected, the number of deaths and the estimated value of the destruction caused, the Mozambique cyclone was the smallest of the four recent DEC responses to flooding. By contrast, the high levels of media coverage and the intensity of the images transmitted resulted in the Mozambique appeal raised over £28M equivalent to all the other three appeals combined.

(P13, Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Mozambique floods appeal funds, report on the initial field work of July 2000)

The uneven nature of funding brings into question the principle of proportionality which underpins the Code of Conduct:

Within the entirety of our programmes, we will reflect considerations of proportionality. Human suffering must be alleviated wherever it is found; life is as precious in one part of a country as another... The implementation of such a universal, impartial and independent policy, can only be effective if we and our partners have access to the necessary resources to provide for such equitable relief, and have equal access to all disaster victims.

(Article two)

Rather than seeing emergency aid as something to be given begrudgingly after an emergency occurs, there is increasing evidence to suggest that adequate early intervention is what is needed. If donors were willing to respond quickly and generously enough to ensure that what is provided allowed people to rebound from the shock to their systems, they would reduce the time for which the beneficiaries are reliant on external inputs and ensure the rapid re-establishment of productive livelihoods.

2.6 Engagement with the military in conflict-based emergencies

Military intervention in *conflict-based emergencies* is becoming increasingly commonplace and has, to some extent, come to be seen as an alternative to seeking ways to find long term political and economic solutions. Intervention alone will probably never work – if conducted at all, they must be part of a wider process, and the political will has to be in place for that process to be effective.

The NATO intervention in Kosovo has been seen as something of a watershed in terms of the humanitarian community's engagement with the military. NATO sought legitimacy for their intervention by shrouding themselves in the flag of humanitarianism while they launched military offensives against Serbia.

The DEC evaluation of the Kosovo intervention highlights the dangers attendant upon an over-close relationship between agencies and extra-territorial military forces which,

in conflict-based emergencies, may blur the division between the military and humanitarian worlds in the eyes of the practitioners and, more importantly, in the eyes of the host communities. The evaluators cite Kofi Anan's assertions about the need to keep humanitarian and military actions distinct and his view that "*if these lines are blurred, there is a grave risk of irreparable damage to the principle of impartiality and humanitarian assistance*". (Pxxviii, Volume I, *Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Kosovo appeal funds*).

Running contrary to these concerns about linkages between humanitarian responses and military ones are the actions of DfID which is seeking to establish closer links between the humanitarian and military spheres through a series of workshops aimed at developing a greater understanding between the two groups of each other's roles and ways of working, with a view to enhancing interaction on the ground in future emergencies.

- *Based on the Kosovo experience, we should develop a paper outlining how we should engage with extra-territorial forces, national armies and militias operating in conflict-based emergencies.*

3. The more specific issues

3.1 Programming

3.1.1 Programme focus

The issue of organisational programme focus currently being debated within the strategic planning process is one that appears in some of the internal evaluations prepared on recent emergency interventions. The basic premise of those advocating a clearer programme focus is that if we had a standard area of response, then we could be better able to respond quickly. Our current policy of seeking to identify needs and then address them is seen by some as leaving us open to the jibe of being a ‘Jack of all trades’ organisation.

The contrary argument that is put forward is that by waiting until we arrive in a country before determining the nature of the programme response, we can see what the specific needs are and what has to be done to address them. In so doing, we maintain an open agenda that allows for an appropriate response to the specific issues facing those most affected by the emergency and allow for the opportunity to develop new competences, such as that gained with separated children in the response to the Rwandan genocide.

The paper outlining our criteria for intervention gives direction in terms of responding to emergencies and for working in the bottom forty countries identified in the Human Development Index. However, in addition, we need to develop criteria for deciding which emergencies we are going to respond to. The recent example of the earthquakes in Honduras and El Salvador suggests that our response is not necessarily governed by the level of need. Although the level and extent of damage resulting from the earthquake in El Salvador was greater than that seen in Honduras, the scale of our response to the latter was much greater.

- *We need clear criteria for deciding which emergencies we will respond to in terms of conducting an assessment in the first place. As stated during the emergencies presentation in September, Concern responded to 39 of the 4,864 emergencies that occurred between 1991 and 2000.*
- *Although the paper outlining Concern’s criteria for intervening in emergencies suggests some of the questions which need to be answered before establishing an emergency response in a new country, we need to be clear as to what information is needed for an **informed decision** to be made as to whether we should respond, what that response should be, and whether we have the capacity to make it.*

In addition, when intervening we need to be clear from the outset as to what we are trying to *achieve* when we establish an intervention. Rather than simply considering what projects could be established, we need to develop a clearer idea of what impact we are trying to have, how that impact will benefit the target group, and how it should be measured.

Greater understanding of the purpose of the intervention would facilitate the development of exit strategies, particularly in those countries whose HDI ranking precludes the need for a longer term intervention.

3.1.2 Initial response

In order to be effective, responses to emergencies have to be timely. In many instances, teams may be torn between the desire to respond and the need to understand what they are responding to. This may be seen as the conflict between the calls of “don’t just stand there, do something” and “don’t just do something, stand there”. In countries in which we have an existing development programme, there have been concerns as to the impact of an emergency response on the longer term programme goals. Essentially, a balance has to be achieved, as being overly hasty in establishing programmes seldom brings benefit to the intended beneficiaries. As stated in the DEC evaluation of the responses to Hurricane Mitch, *an ounce of consultation might have saved a pound of reconstruction*. (P17)

Interventions cannot be undertaken without assessments. However, needs have to be identified rather than presumed and there has to be a recognition that needs may not be uniform - i.e. they will vary between areas and people. The depth and quality of assessment will often be determined by the depth of local knowledge and the length of time available to the assessment team. In situations where the emergency has resulted in significant damage to the local infrastructure, the continuous cycle of assessments being conducted by the various organisations may place an unnecessary additional strain on existing capacity. Each of the DEC evaluations in India makes the recommendation that joint assessments should be considered, combined with a greater level of sharing of information and a willingness to accept the findings of other organisation’s assessments rather than each agency insisting on conducting its own.

On occasions, the intensity of media focus means that the pressure to be *seen* to be responding results in decisions being taken before assessments are completed – basically a trade off between assessing and responding quickly. In most cases, such pressure is counterproductive.

It has also been noted that in responding to an emergency, the selection of the assessment team may predetermine the nature of the programmatic response – i.e. someone with a health background is more likely to advocate for a health intervention, etc. For this reason, there would seem to be logic in suggesting that the assessments should be multi-disciplinary and that they should at least focus on the five basic areas of need – health, shelter, food, nutrition, and water and sanitation.

Some of the evaluations also make reference to the need for coherence in programming – both in terms of the consistent application of policy and practice in the different programme areas within a country, and in terms of ensuring that an integrated approach is maintained. The DEC evaluation of the Orissa intervention is one of several evaluations which highlights the need for an integrated approach to programming if its potential impact is to be realised - e.g. both the hardware and software of water and sanitation interventions are needed to ensure that opportunities for progress are not lost.

Several evaluations, but specifically the ‘wash up’ of the Great Lakes programmes, warn of the dangers of over expansion and a dilution of the effectiveness of the input caused by trying to do too much.

Moving beyond the emergency intervention and into rehabilitation, the debate over the purpose of programme interventions continues – should we seek to restore the condition of the people to the level it was at before the emergency, or should we seek to secure progress against longer term social objectives ?

3.1.3 Targeting, engagement and delivery

The targeting of relief in emergencies, particularly conflict-based ones, is always a contentious issue. The lack of certainty on how best to target aid is reflected in the evaluations which variously suggest that agencies should target communities, households, women within households, vulnerable individuals, etc. Obviously, much depends on the context and a knowledge and understanding of this. There is no absolute way of determining methods of targeting and while special consideration does need to be given to women, it cannot be assumed that targeting aid delivery to them will be either locally appropriate or effective. In his paper *Participation by the affected population in relief operations: a review of the experience of DEC agencies during the response to the 1998 famine in south Sudan*, Pierson Ntata states that the determination of some agencies to deliver all inputs through women was an example of a “*distribution strategy [that] stands out as but one example of imported assumptions and models that bear little relevance to the particular situation under consideration*”. (p14, Ntata)

Ntata also makes the important distinction between “*beneficiary involvement which is primarily related to the supply of physical energies by the affected population to the programme and involvement which allows engagement of the community mind (i.e. social involvement)*”. Citing the fact that women carried out most of the work in the feeding centres, but were often excluded from the consultation process during the planning, monitoring and evaluation phases, he suggests that “*it is possible for much physical involvement or participation to occur without much social learning taking place. On the other hand, much social learning could occur without high levels of physical involvement*” (p14).

Several evaluations also make the point that relief interventions are not conducted in a vacuum and that local factors may have a disproportionate influence on the targeting and delivery of aid: *Although all agencies had attempted to ensure distribution to the most affected, the most vulnerable and the poorest, there were a myriad of factors that influenced those selections. These included the influence of local government officials, familiarity with local communities from previous programming and the proximity of the community to road and river transportation.* (P16, *Bangladesh: 1998 Flood appeal. An independent evaluation*).

The process of delivery can consolidate or challenge local hierarchies and structures. As a general rule, local structures should be understood and, if possible, incorporated into any deliberations on targeting and the delivery of relief. The obvious exception to this arising from the evaluations is the situation which prevailed in the refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire following the exodus of Hutus from Rwanda. Moving *en masse*, people settled according to their area of origin, complete with all of the civil structures that had existed in Rwanda. This was initially seen by agencies as an advantage, but it soon became evident however that working through the established hierarchies merely served to reinforce the power of the people who had overseen the genocide. The third volume of the joint evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda pays particular attention to this, and to the fact that Concern was one of the first

organisations to push for a change in the way in which aid was delivered to the refugees:

Despite the very many difficulties in developing a dialogue between refugees and UN/NGO workers, better communication is a prerequisite for more appropriate interventions, and it is important for the self-esteem of the refugees that they are involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Had more effective feedback mechanisms been created from the outset, the switch from the préfecture or commune level to the household or cellule level for food distributions may have taken place much sooner than it did. For many of those interviewed, this switch represented the single most important change in the operation of the relief agencies. In Lumasi camp in Ngara, Concern was highly regarded because of its vigorous efforts to change from commune level to cellule level distributions.

(P144, Report three, *Humanitarian aid and effects*)

There is also an issue as to the level of inputs being made to a community. In many emergency situations, the fact that refugees and IDPs often lack access to any means of production results in their receiving access to a level of services that considerably exceeds that available to the local communities, and this disparity will only be exacerbated if the standards set by Sphere are attained. Dealing with the resultant local resentment could become an increasingly difficult issue.

Similarly, people being accommodated in villages/towns by the resident population (the DEC report estimates that 60% of the refugees in Kosovo were housed by local communities) tend to be less visible and so less well served than those who have sought refuge in camps. In addition to the potential for the delivery of uneven levels of service and support, there are two further issues – the delivery of benefits for the displaced not in camps, and for the host families who have an additional burden with which to contend. The potential impact of displaced people on an asset poor environment was amply indicated in south Sudan in early 1998 when a relatively small outflow of people from government held towns into an asset-depleted rural Bahr el Ghazal was sufficient to trigger a famine.

3.1.4 Coherence between Dublin and the field

One issue raised in several of the internal reports is that of the location of decision making in terms of the nature of the initial programmatic response. What seems specifically to be at issue is whether the decision to send supplies to the field, and the composition of any such supplies, is determined by the field or by Dublin. While it is evident that this decision should lie with the field, albeit in consultation with Dublin, and should be based on an assessment of needs and the determination of project interventions, the pressure to respond quickly may, on occasions, have resulted in Dublin pre-determining the composition of charters being prepared for the field.

However, the issue of where responsibility for decision making should reside is taken to another level in Concern's own report on the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, which states that *some field staff claimed that the number of beneficiaries that they were able to assist was being dictated by Dhaka rather than by the level of need on the ground with the result that field staff felt that they had responsibility without authority.* (Pp11 and 14, *Bangladesh Cyclone 1991. Evaluation report*). It may also be argued though that staff in the Dublin office may be able to access a wider perspective of the

emergency than that which is available in the thick of the action, and may be able to offer a broader analysis of the levels of need.

In support of the position taken by Save the Children is one of the recommendations made in a report prepared in the wake of the Gujarat intervention to the effect that certain items (blankets, plastic sheeting, etc) should be sourced and moved as a matter of course as they will always be needed.

The decision to move supplies before the field team has had the time to assess needs and determine supply requirements is a specific issue picked up during the course of the DEC evaluation of Kosovo. The evaluators were critical of the decision taken by the Save the Children team in London to send supplies before the results of their assessment had been completed. This decision was defended by those in the head office on the grounds that the basic initial needs were predictable without an assessment, and the level of need was so great that certainty as to precise requirements had to be sacrificed in order to get initial supplies out to the field as quickly as possible. While Save the Children was singled out, it is unlikely that they were alone in taking such actions. Indeed it could be argued that the approach taken by Save the Children is one that, in certain circumstances, is the best course of action. The need to balance likely required inputs with local capacity, delivery times and the level of need may necessitate the shipment of supplies before assessments can be completed.

However, the pre-determining of needs should be used selectively. Initial reports from some team members in Gujarat expressed concern about the decision to send in a charter, but this is countered by the experience of the Ethiopian team in 2000. Despite the level of knowledge of Ethiopia held in the Dublin office, the programme team was given the time to conduct assessments and prepare orders for a charter. This meant that the team was confident that what was chartered to them was what they needed.

In addition, although Concern was one of the last organisations responding to the situation in Ethiopia to order a charter, the supplies it contained were cleared through the airport much more quickly than charters that had been rushed through.

- *Although the need to respond is often great, the programme team has to be given the time to conduct an assessment to identify needs and to clarify procedures to receiving and clearing goods arriving in country. Failure to do so may result in inappropriate items being sent or in goods being held indefinitely in customs.*
- *Country programmes have to be confident that supplies ordered through the logistics systems in Dublin will arrive quickly. The current systems would suggest that this will be the case.*

3.2 Personnel

Any organisation is only as good as the people working for it. Within organisations, staff tend to have a greater voice than beneficiaries, so it is little wonder then that in the internal reports written by field staff, there are many issues raised in relation to staffing.

Among the most commonly identified issues are the following:

- ***The quality of programming is directly related to staff. Their level of experience is important, but the capacity of Dublin to recruit people is obviously an issue – having enough bodies on the ground in a sufficiently timely manner to be able to manage programmes is essential.***
- Experienced staff with a knowledge of Concern systems are essential to the establishment of effective programmes.

Just as the interventions proposed following assessments can, to some extent, be pre-determined by the competences of the assessors, there are also issues about how emergencies are staffed:

- We have moved away from responses that have been caricatured as being staffed with ‘planeloads of Irish nurses’.
- In some instances, experienced national staff are more readily available than they may have been in the past. As a result, the composition of teams may be changing, with more national and fewer international staff being deployed to the field.
- One issue that recurs in several reports is the fact that the high turn over of staff on short contracts does nothing for the development of the programme, institutional knowledge or a sense of stability or coherence in the programme.
- The Ethiopia emergency of 2000 suggested that there were times when availability rather than demand dictated staffing – i.e. people were lined up for the field based on who had applied rather than who the field had asked for.
- One report raised the interesting issue of the contrast between experienced independent-minded staff and inexperienced staff who were ready to take direction from the centre. The report suggested that the ‘Concern model’ for emergency response probably favoured the latter type of staff.
- The DEC report of the response to the Gujarat earthquake cites the example of Abhiyan, a national NGO umbrella organisation which sought to provide a co-ordinating function during the emergency response. The report states that the Abhiyan team had *considerable depth of talent throughout the organisation. This is largely because the member agencies have been remarkably generous in assigning some of their best staff to work in Abhiyan, rather than for themselves, during the crisis. Perhaps this is a model DEC members may wish to learn from!* (Point 34, *The earthquake in Gujarat, India. Report of a monitoring visit*, DEC).

For staff to be able to work effectively, there has to be a clear understanding of their role. Among the issues raised in relation to this by the Concern-specific evaluations are the following:

- ***Assessment teams need clear terms of reference – there are several instances where reports suggest that staff have been sent out without a clear idea of what to expect or of what is expected of them.***
- ***Terms of reference for such assessment teams should include the possibility of the team becoming operational.***
- ***The issue of clarity of role is repeated in the claims that some staff were deployed to programmes without job descriptions.***
- People being sent out to respond to emergencies need to have as thorough an induction as possible prior to leaving Dublin – or from the field in which they are based, perhaps by telephone from regional staff in the Dublin office. They also need to be briefed properly on their arrival in country. This would not always appear to have happened.

Set against this is the recognition that there needs to be flexibility by staff and their managers:

- Given the acute nature of many emergencies, staff have to be adaptable and willing to take on new roles in the event of an emergency.
- Specifically in relation to emergencies in countries in which we already have a programme, there has to be a corresponding willingness on the part of line managers to allow project staff to move between departments and do other work as needed.
- Given the onset of an emergency, it may be necessary for the in-country organogram to be reviewed. Staffing structures should not be static – they have to adapt to ensure that a modified programme is staffed in the most appropriate manner.

As a consequence of the apparent change in the nature of programme staffing, several actions are suggested:

- Given the potential of national staff, attention needs to be given to their skills development.
- Particularly in countries where we already have a presence, national staff have often worked through emergencies before and should be in a position to help decide the direction of the programme.
- Training needs to be made available to all staff.
- The training of national staff and partners prior to the event may reduce the need for large teams of international staff to be flown in to respond to an emergency.
- There has to be a system for keeping knowledge gained from such training updated.

The DEC report of the Orissa emergency highlights the potential danger of recruiting through third parties, citing the example of Oxfam using RedR staff who did not know Oxfam or India, the negative impact that they had on the local administration, and the time that more experienced Oxfam staff had to devote to mending bridges with the administration.

Only one evaluation raises the issue of gender balance within emergency teams, suggesting that having more women in emergency teams would encourage more effective programming in terms of meeting the needs of women.

3.3 Local knowledge

In terms of effective programming, the need to have a good understanding of the context is vital, but this need has been accorded a greater sense of urgency by the fact that some donors are now unwilling to fund agencies who cannot prove that they have a prior history and knowledge of the affected area or country. While not an absolute, in that donors have inconsistently applied this criterion when deciding whether to fund programmes, it is an additional hoop through which we are being made to jump.

The DEC evaluation of Kosovo indicates that prior knowledge is not an insurmountable obstacle to effective programming: *while a presence in the region was undoubtedly important, it was not an essential prerequisite. Concern, for example, who had no previous presence, demonstrated this by mounting a creditable response. Their organisational capacity for mounting an emergency response was critical in this respect.* (pp25 and 26, Volume I, *Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Kosovo appeal funds*).

The report goes on to state that *Concern lacked local knowledge, but believed that it could add value through its experience of providing services to refugees and through its experienced staff. Concern put a lot of effort into learning as much as possible about the Balkans as quickly as possible. It arranged for presentations to senior management by experts on the regions and was careful to listen to agencies like CAD with good regional experience.* (p44, Volume III, *Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Kosovo appeal funds*)

Essentially, the message seems to be that in-depth knowledge of the area is essential and that agencies seeking funding should either have it or recognise that they lack it and so seek to get it as quickly as possible.

3.3.1 Working with local organisations

One of the key dilemmas facing agencies was whether they should go operational themselves, or work through local partners. Those opting for the former tended to have stronger technical capacity, while working through counterparts generally allowed for better dialogue with target populations...A trade-off was frequently made between delivering services and building capacity.

(Pp2 and 24, NGO responses to Hurricane Mitch: evaluations for accountability and learning).

Given the increasing desire to work through local organisations and to build their capacity to respond to emergencies, the selection of local partners is critical. However, several issues need to be borne in mind:

Working through national organisations is not a guarantee of success – they may have a profound understanding of the local situation, but have no experience of emergency interventions. There is a need to balance this with expertise gained from similar emergencies in other areas, and several evaluators raise the option of placing an expatriate project manager or logistician into the national NGO structure for the duration of the emergency, although this would appear to be a potentially difficult arrangement. The DEC report on Kosovo suggests that *collaboration was most successful where a partner had existing emergency capacity, or where an INGO had a previous capacity-building relationship with its local partner.* (Pxxv, Volume I, *Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Kosovo appeal funds*).

Expecting too much from national organisations, and expecting them to expand into the available space may result in a poor programme and in long term damage to the partner. The DEC evaluation of Orissa states that *as a result of the sudden availability of funding after the cyclone many CBOs and local NGOs took on more than they could really manage effectively* (P31). This is a concern that it stated in several evaluations – the sudden ready availability of funding and the desire of INGOs to work with national NGOs means that national organisations are often swamped with demands and funding. In seeking to meet these demands, national NGOs may so overstretch themselves that their competence and credibility become threatened.

- *In order to be confident of the capacity and experience of national organisations, we need to develop a coherent mechanism for identifying potential local partners and for determining what they can achieve.*

- *For coherence and to avoid confusion, we need to develop standard partnership guidelines. These will assist both the programme director and the national organisation to understand roles and responsibilities.*

If we decide to work through local partners, then the possibility of building their capacity during the acute emergency phase is limited. However, our approach to the work must ensure that agencies must not be left worse off than they were when the emergency started.

One further issue is that raised in the DEC report on Orissa: being associated with a short-term delivery-intensive emergency response may have an effect on the local communities' impression of the national NGOs and their role – i.e. they may come to see them as service delivers, an image that they may not want, especially once the external agencies leave the area and things revert to the *status quo ante*.

3.4 Speed of response

There has been a general concern expressed in several of the internal reports about how quickly we are able to respond to emergencies.

Given the availability of emergency funding through the Chief Executive's Emergency Fund, which allows for the immediate dispersal of up to £ 250,000 for a new emergency, the principle institutional factor limiting our ability to respond to emergencies is the availability of staff.

If adequately supported and maintained, the Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU) and the Emergency Register (ER) should give the organisation an edge in terms of having appropriate staff available to respond to the initial stages of an emergency.

3.5 Impact/Data collection

Several evaluations raise concerns about the quality of the monitoring and evaluation of the emergency programmes, linking this directly to the quality of the initial assessments, and to the extent to which there is genuine beneficiary participation in the process of programme design and implementation.

Programme monitoring allows for adjustments and improvements in the programme and for greater accountability to the beneficiaries. The only way in which we can be sure that our programmes are having a positive impact is if we can show it. Limiting our monitoring to *input indicators* (e.g. how many blankets we have delivered) is almost inevitable in the initial stages of an emergency, but if we are to show the effect of our work, they need to be replaced by *impact indicators* (i.e. showing what effect the programme is having on the beneficiaries) at the earliest opportunity.

Inevitably, if we are to use impact indicators, we need clear base lines against which to measure this impact and to have a clear understanding of what effect the programme will have. However, the impact may also be other than the expected and monitoring approaches have to ensure that we are able to capture the unexpected impact of the intervention.

In addition though, process indicators outlining the mechanism used for the delivery of the programme, need to be identified – was the delivery process enabling and empowering, did it reinforce or challenge local structures, etc.

Some evaluations raised the issue of the need to establish mechanisms for the independent verification of the reports submitted by national NGOs. We need to be confident that we have a mechanism that ensures transparency and accountability. Field staff should make independent visits to distribution sites or programme areas and follow up with the beneficiaries on the delivery of the programme.

3.6 Contingency planning

Given the apparent acceptance of the need for contingency planning and emergency preparedness, it is interesting to note that the evaluations seem to suggest that the international community's ability to determine the scale of future emergencies seems, to date, to have been somewhat limited. Most of the 'big' emergencies seem to have been on a scale that the reports say could not have been forecast – the outflow of refugees from Rwanda into Tanzania and Zaire, and from Serbia into Kosovo, the impact of Hurricane Mitch, and the extent of the flooding in Bangladesh in 1998, Orissa in 1999, and Mozambique in 2000.

This failure should not discourage the development of more effective monitoring systems of potential future emergencies. In countries in which we are working, it might be helpful to ensure the early identification of potential local partners who would be effective in responding to emergencies, and to ensure that their staff, along with Concern staff, receive training and are familiar with disaster manuals or Concern's emergency modules. The training of staff and counterparts is an important part of preparedness as it allows a quicker, more appropriate and more focused response

In those countries in which we are not currently operational, we should identify likely 'hot spots', conduct assessments, identify potential local partners, and consider supporting them with their on going programmes. This would give us an edge in terms of knowing something of the area and having appropriate local partners identified should an emergency occur to which we wish to establish a response.

As previously noted, there is considerable unwillingness on the part of donors to fund emergency preparedness work. As noted in the DEC report on Kosovo, *all DEC agencies reported that there was little funding available prior to the emergency for preparedness... This absence of funding for preparedness contrasts with the situation between March and July 1999, when agencies...had to turn down funding because they could not spend it in time* (P29, Volume I). This is perhaps an issue which should be taken up at an institutional level with the donors.

3.7 Application of performance standards

Analysis of performance standards seems, increasingly, to focus on the degree of familiarity and compliance with the Sphere standards. Certainly the DEC evaluations seem intent on using these as a benchmark. However, the other key indicators are those found in the Code of Conduct and the People in Aid guidelines. The DEC report on Kosovo suggested that there was generally poor use of each of these: *Generally the evaluation team found that awareness of the Code of Conduct and its principles, the*

Sphere Standards and the People in Aid Code was poor, and little attention was given to their application... There was very little monitoring of adherence to the Code and standards in agencies' planning and implementation of programmes and no requirement from the DEC to report against them... The People in Aid Secretariat reported that it had received a substantial number of complaints from aid workers returning from Kosovo. These included, inadequate inductions, debriefings and medicals, overwork and recruitment of inexperienced staff. (Pp75 and 76, Volume I).

Taking a broader view of the application of performance standards, there is the issue of Concern's own emergency modules and the degree to which they are followed. Should there be an audit function to evaluate the extent to which projects comply with policy and good practice ?

Similarly, where systems exist, they need to be followed. A case in point would be logistics systems. Concern's internal report on the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone states that: *During Concern's response to the cyclone both in relief and rehabilitation phases, Concern systems and management procedures showed some serious defects... Individuals were able to exploit such weaknesses for personal gain... Concern's systems for control were not being adhered to at this time... It has been estimated by the Internal Auditor that the cumulative effects of these weaknesses could amount to a 'leakage' factor... [that] would equate to £117,000.*

While the need for more effective procedures has been learned in Bangladesh, it is unclear whether the lessons that should have been learnt from the failure of the logistics systems in Mozambique in 2000 have been.

- *Standard logistics systems should be employed in all countries, irrespective of whether the programme is developmental or emergency-based. Once these systems have been established, they need to be maintained, perhaps through the establishment of field audit systems to ensure compliance with good practice.*

Similarly, where minimum standards exist for basic relief items (such as plastic sheeting), they should be adhered to if at all possible. Making a small financial saving is not sufficient reason for disregarding such standards. The DEC report on Gujarat is very critical of the failure of DEC agencies to observe the established Sphere standards:

Agencies acknowledged that there had been cases when they knowingly contravened the Sphere Standards. Tents had been supplied below the recommended size because others were not available. Although the standards were available in Hindi and Gujarati, no agency had taken a lead on distributing them or following them up with other organisations. (Point 58, The earthquake in Gujarat, DEC)

Given that donors generally, and the DEC specifically, will conduct reviews of emergency interventions, there should be a greater incentive for organisations to address the needs of their target groups in an adequate manner.

Standard systems exist, but it is unclear from the evaluations as to the extent to which they are being used. Particularly when working with local partners, the use of formal systems for targeting, programme planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and financial control are essential – they offer a framework and a guide, creating neutral space within which both organisations can operate (cf. the Orissa emergency response report).

3.8 Donors

The importance of preparedness is crucial, but it cannot be undertaken without donor support. As previously indicated, this is often not forthcoming. The joint evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda suggests that there is an intrinsic resistance on the part of government donors to fund preparedness work and, once again, highlights the increasingly important role of the media: *For a donor official to approve funds... to airlift food or water equipment to the site of a possible refugee flow is highly improbable... civil service organisations are inherently “resource conscious” and find it easier to be reactive rather than proactive. The increasing role of the media in mobilizing public and political pressures on civil servants in certain high-profile, media-attracting emergencies may be increasing the reactive tendency within the system.* (Page 114, Report 3, *Humanitarian aid and effects*).

The essentially reactive nature of donor funding is also highlighted in the synthesis report: *The extent to which funding was reactive to events was striking. There was a marked contrast in resource availability between the “tap-on” period from mid-July to September, when funding appeared limitless, and other periods, when it was less readily available. The factors contributing to this reactive characteristic are many and their relationship complex. Media coverage and the concern of almost all organizations (donor organizations and the military as well as NGOs and UN agencies) involved in the response for “profile” and “visibility” were clearly significant. What was clear from the study is that the way the system was resourced was sub-optimal, limiting the effectiveness of the response and substantially increasing eventual costs. Preparedness and contingency planning were not encouraged, a position not helped by variations in conceptualisation of preparedness between agencies and donors... While donor organizations did provide some “up-front” funding this was quite inadequate in the face of such a large and highly dynamic emergency and in some cases did not even reach the levels previously agreed by donor organizations.* (P30, *Synthesis report*)

The prompt release of funds is a concern that has recently been recognised by ECHO. At a meeting in Dublin on 8 February 2001, Frances Smith (Head of ECHO’s unit responsible for HR, training, and contractual relations with NGOs) stated that ECHO recognised that they were no longer seen as a first wave donor. The delays in decision making meant that it was now often a week or more after the onset of an emergency before they released funds. In response to this, ECHO has set up a ten million euro contingency fund from which two million euros can be released overnight for a new emergency. This rapid release funding will be available only to those agencies ECHO feels have the capacity to respond.

Set against this is the fact that some donors have expressed an unwillingness to release funds to organisations that have not had a presence in the country prior to the emergency. Thus in response to the floods in Orissa, while DEC decided to fund Concern, DfID chose not to. It would appear that MSF may be able to raise funds for emergencies in new countries because donors identify them as bringing a package – health interventions – that can be used in any emergency. Donors seem less open to agencies who respond to emergencies but then seek to address the needs of the people as they find them.

In terms of operating in conflict-based chronic emergencies, donor analysis of what aid is needed is becoming more restrictive – in some instances they have adopted what would appear to be an excessively short term, ‘life saving only’ template for funding which Hugo Slim has termed “humanitarian minimalism” and has contributed to the claim that government aid is becoming overly politicised. The attitude of the donors is contrary to the arguments in favour of the utilisation of developmental approaches to relief intervention and results from the argument that such approaches may do more to build the capacity of the combatants than the intended beneficiaries.

3.8.1 The DEC

Given the increasing importance of DEC funding to large scale emergencies, it is important that there is a clear understanding of their criteria and requirements. The DEC considers four basic issues in deciding whether to fund agencies wishing to respond to an emergency:

- financial resources
- volume capacity (the speed at which an organisation can build its capacity)
- skills (held by staff)
- local knowledge

Although there is no absolute coherence between the various DEC evaluations, most of them consider programmes against the following criteria:

- Appropriateness
- Coverage
- Protection
- Efficiency
- Performance standards
- Effectiveness and impact
- Coherence
- Connectedness
- Targeting
- Preparedness and initial response

3.9 Co-ordination

Acknowledging that *in the heat of the emergency, coordination was subordinate to the need to get established and become operational*, the HPN paper reviewing Hurricane Mitch suggests that the poor level of co-ordination is almost a constant refrain in emergency evaluations:

A virtually constant theme in evaluations of humanitarian operations anywhere in the world is poor coordination, along with the retrospective admission that better coordination (between aid agencies, but also between agencies and local authorities) could have avoided some major problems. There appears to be little institutionalised experience of, and skill in, developing coordination mechanisms, or in clarifying their functions and objectives. There is also the common argument that the need for speed makes coordination less of a priority. Less easily admitted is the weight of institutional self-interest in aid-agency decisions. Again, this seems an area where some fresh thinking and staff guidance are required.

(Pp 28 and 17, *NGO responses to Hurricane Mitch: evaluations for accountability and learning*).

While the co-ordination of emergency responses should be the preserve of the government, in many instances this does not happen. In the case of natural disasters, weak central co-ordination caused by too much work, limited resources, etc may result in the central government being unable to co-ordinate the activities of a sudden influx of agencies. Similarly, in conflict-based emergencies, there may be no government – or several groups vying to be regarded as the government.

In a large scale emergency, the sheer volume of actors may defeat the desire to co-ordinate: *The...multiplicity of actors...would have strained the co-ordinating capacity of local administration even in a normal situation, let alone one itself damaged by the cyclone.* (P33, DEC evaluation of Orissa).

Given these difficulties, it is essential that manageable units of co-ordination are established as soon as possible, whether at a regional or a district level, and that all of the organisations working within these geographical areas come together to agree their interventions.

What is evident is that in the absence of co-ordination, an increased sense of competition often develops between organisations seeking to stake their claim to programmes or geographical areas of influence, and duplication of interventions may result. In such circumstances there is also a tendency for there to be an over-concentration on the more easily accessible areas, with the result that the distribution of resources, which are often insufficient to meet needs anyway, is uneven. Concern's willingness to seek to address the needs of people living in less accessible areas is highlighted in the DEC Gujarat report: *Of the DEC members, Concern played an especially useful role in seeking out the areas which other agencies had missed.* (Point 8, DEC evaluation of Gujarat)

The DEC evaluation of the response to Hurricane Mitch also highlights the fact that the lack of co-ordination within the humanitarian community resulted in the failure to standardise salaries, construction costs, food for work payments, etc.

Hence, in situations where there is no government, the question of who co-ordinates the humanitarian response is an essential one – and one that has yet to be resolved. The DEC report of the floods in Orissa states that Unicef chaired co-ordination meetings but claims that these degenerated into fora for exchanging information rather than co-ordination. (P33, DEC evaluation of Orissa). There is often a suggestion within the humanitarian community that OCHA should take advantage of its non-operational position by taking responsibility for humanitarian co-ordination, but there seems little enthusiasm within OCHA for a role other than information gathering.

The DEC report on Gujarat is critical of the impact of the OCHA UNDAC (UN Disaster Assessment and Co-ordination, the natural disasters section of OCHA) team in the field: *The UNDAC team which was supposed to co-ordinate the response proved to be a great disappointment. They collected information but produced no result.* (Point 11, executive summary, DEC report on Gujarat). In terms of their impact on the overall co-ordination of the response, the evaluators suggest that *the UN's attempts at co-ordination had been a failure* and that *the UN had not played a useful role.* (Points 34 and 55, DEC report on Gujarat).

The Orissa and Gujarat reports both advocate for the regular meeting of DEC agencies in all future emergencies.

3.10 Logistical issues

Several of the internal reports recognise that the establishment of logistics systems are an essential requirement, the aspects of which are identified as the logistics manual, the stores, the emergency catalogue, support during emergencies from the RDU, and the delivery of supplies from Dublin.

The most important single aspect though is the availability of appropriate staff – in order to be confident that we have the capacity to respond to emergencies, we need more people familiar with the manual and able to deploy at short notice to new emergencies. As with all emergency staff, there is obviously an issue of identifying and meeting training needs.

On a wider level, transport infrastructure is also an issue. In both Ethiopia and Mozambique, the condition of the Concern vehicles at the outset of the emergency was very poor.

The successful clearance of charters or ships is dependent upon familiarity with local requirements for clearance, customs procedures, etc. This knowledge should be acquired as part of emergency preparedness or as a matter of urgency in any emergency where the external delivery of supplies is a possibility.

A persistent concern has been the capacity to communicate adequately between the field and Dublin. The current testing of the satellite communications equipment being conducted in Gujarat has reinforced the view that considerable work needs to be done before we can be confident that we are able to use the technology that is currently available for voice, text and image transmission.

One issue that has been highlighted as important in terms of emergency preparedness is the need for detailed maps of countries rather than just of the areas in which we work.

3.11 The media

*The most striking illustration of the threat to humanitarian values is the growing threshold of human suffering which is now considered 'acceptable' in crisis. In donor countries, this has been evidenced by the dramatic fall in contributions by the public and the often selective determination by news agencies of which kinds of humanitarian problems become 'issues'. **The media effectively has the power today to decide whether or not it is 'scandalous' that thousands of people are dying from famine and who, if anyone, should answer for this.***

(P9, RRN Paper 25, *Humanitarian action in protracted crises: the new relief 'agenda' and its limits*).

This was none more so than in Mozambique. As already pointed out, the level of money raised by the DEC in response to the floods in Mozambique was disproportionate to the amount raised in comparable appeals over recent years. The initial DEC report on the Mozambique appeal suggests that several factors probably coalesced at the time of the floods and suggests that whether or not an emergency receives media attention is highly fickle and subjective:

- *The media were already in the country to cover the first wave of flooding and were therefore in place to film the dramatic scenes as the South African helicopters fought to rescue people from the water;*
- *Maputo is easily reached from Johannesburg, the base for many journalists covering Southern Africa;*
- *The floods occurred towards the end of the UK financial year and some journalists had spare funds available to cover foreign news stories;*
- *There were few other competing major news stories;*
- *The media criticism of the slow response by the British Government also helped to keep the story in the news, as did 'spectacular' incidents like the birth of Baby Rosita in a tree on March 1st.*

(P12, *Independent evaluation of expenditure of DEC Mozambique floods appeal funds. Report on initial field work of July 2000*).

The importance of the media in raising funds means that there is often pressure for agencies to be seen to be doing things as soon as they reach areas in which the media already has a presence. However, this pressure is contrary to the need to develop at least a rudimentary understanding of the situation, and the needs of the intended beneficiaries before establishing a response.

In this regard it is perhaps important to note the distinction between *visibility* and *profile*. *Visibility* in terms of what the media show us doing may have short term benefits with the public and in our capacity to raise funds from them, but *profile* is a wider issue related to how we would like to be perceived by beneficiaries, donors and the public. Profile with donors and beneficiaries will be derived from conducting appropriate assessments and then following them with high quality programmes.

3.11.1 Managing the media

If Concern is to send its own media people out to an acute emergency, they need to be part of the initial team arriving on site. Sending people out a week after the event is of limited utility as the international media has often moved on to the next matter of interest.

Emerging from the internal reports is a view that media people need to go sooner and stay longer than has been the case in the past. As with all other staff, media staff need clear terms of reference when deployed to the field – i.e. a clear idea of what they are producing and who their audience is likely to be, and to whom they will be reporting.

The potential for external media to add to the workload of already overstretched programme staff is clearly indicated in reports following the flooding in Mozambique. In his synthesis of reports and the views of the programme team, Jo Thomas devotes considerable time to the issue of managing information and the media, and makes the following recommendations:

1. *The release of press information with regard to the emergency should be shared with and approved by the Desk Officer.*
2. *Visiting journalists should be accompanied and managed by a Press Officer who would ensure that they have information, access and the communication systems that they require.*

3. *The press management function should be kept away from the office. Visiting journalists should either bring their own communications equipment or it should be provided by Concern and returned at the end of the visit.*
4. *Information from Concern to the press should be managed through a daily press briefing and selected pre-arranged interviews with key staff.*
5. *One coordinator should be identified within the PR department to liase with the field on arrangement of flights, accommodation etc.*

3.11.2 Information management

In addition to the issues dealing specifically with the media, Jo Thomas makes two additional recommendations related more directly to the flow and frequency of information, both of which need to be taken on board:

1. *Regular situation reports from the field are essential to keep everybody informed of the developing emergency. At the height of the emergency production of sit reps may need a dedicated information officer reporting to the CD.*
2. *The importance of regular financial reports to the Emergency Project Managers may require a separate emergency accountant.*

4. Conclusions and issues for discussion

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation review was to identify common issues and lessons which need to be learned if Concern is to establish more effective interventions in future emergencies.

Based on the review it is evident that there are several issues that need to be addressed, but that there are also issues on which Concern has to determine an organisational position. The following summary seeks to identify the issues in each of these categories.

4.2 The issues

4.2.1 Pre-emergency monitoring

Monitoring is a key aspect of our understanding of what is going on in the world and of our readiness to respond to new emergencies. In order to ensure that we have effective monitoring procedures we need to:

- Improve our emergency planning approaches in existing country programmes.
- Improve monitoring mechanisms in areas in which we are not currently working.
- Establishment of pre-emergency assessments to identify potential partners and to develop an understanding of the context.
- Consider the option of establishing regional emergency teams – do we have this already with DEMU and the large number of people from the Bangladesh programme who are identified for the RDU and the ER ?

4.2.2 Criteria for response

Although the paper *How Concern targets countries for poverty elimination* offers guidelines on those countries in which Concern may intervene, the current criteria for responding to an emergency – or the expectation of one – are unclear and Concern needs to:

- Articulate what triggers the call for an assessment, whether before or after the onset of an emergency.
- Clarify in what circumstances it would respond to an emergency – what is needed for an **informed decision** to be made ?
- Establish clear criteria for determining when Concern will establish a programme in response to an emergency.

4.2.3 Assessments

Assessments may be seen to have two distinct functions: an essential component of any pre-emergency monitoring mechanisms or the first step in an emergency response.

In the event of an emergency, the programme team has to be given the time to conduct an assessment to identify needs, although the depth of any such initial assessments may depend on the level of need and the requirement to address those needs.

Any assessment that is carried out should seek to:

- develop an understanding of the context and causes of the emergency
- identify those in greatest need
- identify possible programme responses

- identify what Concern needs to have in place in order to be able to respond
- identify areas least covered by other organisations
- identify potential local partners

Given that there is often a scarcity of resources in the wake of an emergency, assessment teams may consider participating in inter-agency assessments.

4.2.4 Rapid response capacity

Fundamental to any intervention are the staff needed to implement the programmes. The RDU has been re-established and moves are underway to establish the Emergency Register, but considerable work needs to be carried out to bed these registers in and to ensure that they are properly supported and maintained.

By far the larger issue currently facing the registers is the delivery of adequate training to those people who are included on them. A clear policy and schedule needs to be drawn up and the training needs to take place as a matter of urgency.

4.2.5 Contingency planning

In terms of ensuring more effective contingency planning, there are several steps which need to be taken:

- Establish emergency response plans for all countries, but starting with the perceived ‘hot spots’.
- The prior identification of potential local partners in some of these areas would provide us with a known local partner in the event of a future intervention.
- The training of staff, whether from Concern or from potential partner organisations, prior to the emergency is essential. If this training is maintained it should encourage a faster, more coherent and more focussed emergency response.

4.2.6 Supplies

Generally speaking, the feedback on the current supplies systems is positive. It is essential that the current competence be sustained and that the emergency catalogue is updated, distributed to all fields, and maintained.

The purchase of local supplies is becoming an area that is under increasing scrutiny from donors. We must ensure that donors’ tendering procedures are followed in their entirety. Failure to do so may result in the loss of donor funding for the intervention.

Similarly, steps should be taken by all fields to ensure that all local purchases meet recognised standards and specifications. Such standards should be identified and circulated to all fields as soon as possible. It will then be the responsibility of each programme to ensure that it complies with these standards.

4.2.7 Responses

There is a clear need to balance the need to react quickly with the need to know what is being reacted to. As indicated above, allowing time for the completion of an assessment is vital.

The current (but soon to expire) Strategic Plan states that the emergency programme focus is on four key areas – nutrition, social services, public and environmental health, and camp management. There would appear to be three basic options as to the future nature of programme responses:

- a) That Concern should focus its programme responses more specifically, perhaps to the extent of specialising in one programme area such as shelter. It is argued that this would allow able to respond quickly and to establish programmes of a consistently high standard.
- b) That Concern should focus its responses on an agreed range of interventions intended to address the basic needs of food, health, nutrition, shelter and water and sanitation.
- c) That Concern should maintain its current policy of basing responses on an assessment of need rather than on the wish to deliver a pre-ordained package of responses.

One of the options to arise in the discussions around the development of a new Strategic Plan is that of linkage between programme interventions and the International Development Targets, and the suggestion that there should be a clear linkage between the desired areas of programme competence in development and emergency programmes. In addressing the issue of programme focus, it is important that Concern determines what it is trying to achieve in responding to emergencies. Is the intention of an emergency response to achieve any – or all – of the following:

- To meet basic needs in crisis situations.
- To restore productivity and livelihood security of the poorest in the affected areas.
- To seek to secure progress against longer term social objectives
- To support peace and reconciliation.
- To contribute to the addressing of the causes of conflict.

From this, the types of programmes in which we would engage should become more apparent. In a paper prepared by Mark Hogan it was suggested that the principle areas of programme focus should be to:

- Prevent a breakdown in the food chain
- Provide appropriate feeding for those whose food chain has broken down
- Carry out health functions appropriate to support the feeding programmes and to prevent or treat epidemic disease
- Ensure that there is adequate environmental sanitation to prevent the spread of environmentally borne disease
- Maintain and promote dignity, community spirit and education for beneficiaries through primary school education and community activities

In addition to these, we should take into account the need to re-stimulate the local economy and means of production.

Purpose of emergency response

The organisation needs to make a decision as to what it is trying to achieve in emergency interventions, and to then decide what approach to programming would best meet the achievements that the organisation wishes to make.

Scale of response

Related to the issue of programme focus is that of the scale of the response, and the fact that trying to do too much might lead to nothing being done well. If adequate personnel and management structures are not available, then establishing a smaller, well-focussed and adequately supported response might achieve more than a larger over-stretched and under-supported one.

Programme design

Initial programmatic decisions may have to be taken quickly, but after the initial response, there is a need to be more consultative – to know what assistance people need and to deliver it in a manner that allows for consultation and the explanation of actions.

Adaptability

The situation on the ground can change quickly. Programme responses have to change with it. In responding to the originally identified needs, we should not assume that these are constant. We need to ensure that we increase our knowledge and understanding of the beneficiaries' needs and of the impact of the interventions that we are making, and that we are responsive to changes that develop.

4.2.8 Personnel

In terms of personnel, the most obvious single factor is the changing composition of the staffing of emergencies. In terms of its staffing complement, Concern is no longer an 'Irish' organisation – the internationalisation of the international posts and the increasing role of national staff have seen a fundamental change in the way in which emergency programmes have been staffed over the last ten years.

Given this, the importance of recognising the experience of national staff who may have worked in earlier emergency responses is essential.

The updating of skills for all staff – and for local counterparts – is also a key factor in ensuring that people are well prepared in the event of an emergency.

In addition to this, there are several key factors which need to be considered in terms of emergency capacity:

- Experienced staff with a knowledge of Concern systems are essential to the establishment of effective programmes.
- The repeated deployment of senior programme staff on short-term contracts retards programme development, institutional memory and programme coherence. Once programmes have been established, it is important that the Country/Emergency Director and the Programme Managers are deployed for a sufficient period of time to allow continuity to develop.
- The experience of the Great Lakes suggested that at that time the recruitment of international staff for emergencies was driven by who came through the door in Dublin rather than by who was required by the field. While there has been considerable improvement in this regard, it is important that the organisation continues to deploy to the field those staff requested by the Country Director.
- All staff – whether assessment teams, RDU, longer-term staff or media – need to have clear terms of reference or job descriptions before going out to the field.
- All staff also need to have as full a briefing as possible both before they leave for the emergency and once they arrive there – assuming that they are not the first on the ground.
- Accessing staff from external registers can be problematic – a lack of familiarity with Concern systems and ethos can result in differences of practice and approach.

4.2.9 Measuring impact

We need to move beyond the recording of *output indicators* and ensure that *impact indicators* for our work are established as soon as possible after the establishment of an intervention. We need to be clear as to what we are trying to **achieve** rather than just what we are trying to **do**, and to establish *process indicators* to analyse **how** we do things.

4.2.10 Ways of working – direct and indirect implementation

Is Concern to establish a preferred form of intervention – i.e. direct or indirect – or maintain a policy of assessing the situation on the ground before deciding how to respond ?

The establishment of an indirect programme response suggests an element of *capacity building* may be appropriate – i.e. enhancing the capability of local government or organisations to address locally identified needs. It is important to note though that the amount of capacity building which can really be achieved in an emergency is limited, and that there may a trade off between the time spent in supporting national organisations to develop their own ability to respond and the greater long term impact of this by not addressing the immediate problem ourselves.

In emergency situations, particularly immediately after the onset of an emergency, local capacity to address the problems may be limited, and more effective organisations may soon become swamped with the additional demands placed on them by organisations wishing to work with or through them.

Concern must ensure that it makes maximum use of existing local capacities – identifying what exists and helping to develop it – rather than establishing project activities that the beneficiaries could achieve by themselves.

Working with local organisations may be one way of accessing local knowledge, but it is no guarantee of enhanced emergency programming. National NGOS with whom we have worked on development programmes are not necessarily those who would be best suited to responding to an emergency. Criteria for selecting local partners should be drafted and, as far as possible, used in determining with whom we will work.

Concern also needs to develop standard partnership guidelines identifying the roles and responsibilities of Concern and the local partner.

4.2.11 Performance standards

External

The degree to which the central performance standards (Sphere, the Code of Conduct, the Humanitarian Charter and the People in Aid code) are understood and implemented at a field level is uncertain. The wide dissemination and application of the key aspects of each of these guides would appear to be an important issue to be taken forward, but this requires the organisation to take their dissemination and implementation seriously.

Internal

In those areas where performance standards are contained within the existing internal emergency modules, the issue of whether programmes should be required to comply with these standards needs to be addressed throughout the organisation.

A specific issue would be the establishment of uniform minimum standards in logistics which could be adopted by all fields, covering issues such as supply systems and the purchasing of supplies.

Agreed systems for targeting, programme planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and financial control should be established when seeking to work with local partners.

4.2.12 Learning lessons

Although Concern has clearly learnt some lessons from emergencies, there is a clear need to invest in organisational learning from complex emergencies. In this regard, it would seem that while broad inter-agency evaluations offer a useful context, Concern must also conduct its own evaluations in order to learn from experience.

While accepting the specificity of emergencies and the fact that, in their midst, seeking to learn lessons is always going to be seen as less important than getting on with the job in hand, it is important that more time and effort is invested in identifying the key issues and ensuring that any lessons that have been learned in one intervention are documented and disseminated.

There is also an issue as to how emergency responses are managed in so far as the circumstances of an emergency should dictate the nature of the response. For example, the establishment and management of a shelter programme in post-genocide Rwanda will be markedly different from that of a similar programme in post-flood Bangladesh.

4.2.13 Co-ordination

A virtually constant theme in evaluations of humanitarian operations anywhere in the world is poor coordination, along with the retrospective admission that better coordination...could have avoided some major problems. There appears to be little institutionalised experience of, and skill in, developing coordination mechanisms, or in clarifying their functions and objectives.

Co-ordination is an essential part of any emergency intervention and is something which Concern tends to do well. It is important to note though that some DEC evaluators are pushing for co-ordination meetings between DEC agencies to be established in addition to whatever national, regional, general or sectoral co-ordination meetings already exist.

If OCHA are to be pushed into take on a stronger role in the co-ordination of emergencies, then it is essential that they recruit (or train) appropriate staff with the skills and experience needed to co-ordinate in an effective manner.

4.2.14 Media

There is no doubt that while capricious, the media play an essential role in emergencies and that Concern needs to maximise any benefits that they can from

media access. There seems to be general agreement that media staff should be sent sooner and for longer to any breaking emergency.

4.2.15 Proportionality

Article two of the Code of Conduct states that the programmes of all signatories to the Code *will reflect considerations of proportionality. Human suffering must be alleviated wherever it is found; life is as precious in one part of a country as another... The implementation of such a universal, impartial and independent policy, can only be effective if we and our partners have access to the necessary resources to provide for such equitable relief, and have equal access to all disaster victims.*

The evaluations have shown though that this is not the case: the 1999 UN appeal for Kosovo amounted to US\$207 per person, while the appeal for Sierra Leone raised US\$16 and for the Democratic Republic of Congo US\$8. Similarly, the level of funding raised by the DEC for the flooding in Mozambique in 2000 was disproportionate to previous appeals of this nature: *In terms of the size of the population affected, the number of deaths and the estimated value of the destruction caused, the Mozambique cyclone was the smallest of the four recent DEC responses to flooding. By contrast, the high levels of media coverage and the intensity of the images transmitted resulted in the Mozambique appeal raised over £28M equivalent to all the other three appeals combined.*

Is there an advocacy issue around the proportionality of aid and the fact that most emergencies are chronically underfunded, or is this disparity something with which the organisation decides it will have to live ?

4.2.16 Engagement with the military

Given the number of conflict-based emergencies in which are deployed, Concern should develop a paper outlining how programme staff should engage with national, extra-territorial and militia forces.

Papers read

1. Aengus Finucane
A framework for survival: health, human rights and humanitarian assistance in conflicts and disasters: the changing role of NGOs
c. 1992
2. John Borton et al, ODI
An evaluation of Concern's 1990 – 1991 emergency programme in Kosti Province, Sudan
January 1992
3. Mohammed Mobin, Paul O'Brien, Paddy Maguiness
Bangladesh Cyclone 1991, evaluation report
March 1992
4. Netherlands Development Co-operation
Humanitarian Aid to Somalia
Evaluation Report, 1994
5. Jack Finucane
Concern's experience in the Great Lakes refugee programme, 1994-1995
November 1995
6. Joint evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda
The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience.
Five papers:
 1. *Historical perspective: some explanatory factors*
 2. *Early warning and conflict management*
 3. *Humanitarian aid and effects*
 4. *Re-building post-war Rwanda*
 5. *Synthesis report*March 1996
7. Howard Dalzell
Emergency preparedness and response strategy
March 1997
8. Kosovo, April 1999
ODI and Valid International
Report: August 2000
9. DEC evaluation of Bangladesh floods, September 1998
Roger Young and Associates
Report: January 2000
10. Nicholas Russell
Echo evaluation of Bangladesh rehabilitation projects post 1998 floods
January 2000

11. DEC evaluation of South Sudan, May 1998
ETC (UK) Ltd
Report: June 1999
12. Simon Harragin and Chol Changath Chol
The south Sudan vulnerability study
Save the Children (UK)
1999
13. Pierson R.T. Ntata
Participation by the affected population in relief operations: a review of the experience of DEC agencies during the response to the 1998 famine in south Sudan
ALNAP
June 1999
14. DEC evaluation of Hurricane Mitch, November 1998
Espacios Consultores, S.A.
Report: March 2000
15. Unicef evaluation
Lessons learned from Hurricane Mitch
Notes from meeting, January 1999
16. François Grunewald, Véronique de Geoffroy and Sarah Lister
NGO responses to Hurricane Mitch: evaluations for accountability and learning
HPN Paper 34
November 2000
17. Albania/Kosovo:
Howard Dalzell *Lessons from Albania: a discussion document*
Connell Foley *Concern's Kosovo intervention: some comments*
Connell Foley *Policy aspects for further involvement with Kosovars*
All papers, May 1999
18. Niall Roche and Howard Dalzell
Lessons learned from assessment visit to sites of the Turkish earthquake
September 1999
19. DEC evaluation of Orissa, November 1999
INTRAC
Report: November 2000
20. Ron Bannerman
Orissa emergency report
July 2000

21. Venezuela - Assessment report of Concern emergency response to the disaster of December 1999
Noel Maloney
November 2000
22. DEC evaluation of Mozambique, February 1999
Report on the initial field work
July 2000
23. Concern reports on Mozambique:
- | | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| David Gough's report | March 2000 |
| Olivia Cosgrave's report | May 2000 |
| Niall Roche's report | June 2000 |
| Ron Bannerman's report | May 2000 |
| • Jo Thomas's feedback | May 2000 |
| • Pat MacLaughlin's feedback | May 2000 |
| • Susan Fraser's feedback | May 2000 |
- Maud Baritaud
Lessons learning – desk report
September 2000
- Joe Thomas
Review of emergency response – Mozambique 2000
October 2000
24. Dominic Crowley
Ethiopian emergency response and preparedness
May 2000
25. Kwan Li
Gujarat earthquake – initial assessment and response
28th January to 2nd February 2001
26. Tony Vaux and Mihir Bhatt
The earthquake in Gujarat. Report on a monitoring visit
DEC March 2001
27. Dylan Hendrickson
Humanitarian action in protracted crises: the new relief 'agenda' and its limits
RNN Paper 25
April 1998
28. Geoff Loane
Emergency response capacity: an assessment
January 2000
29. Matthew Carter
Power and conflict: humanitarian interventions in complex political emergencies
October 1995

30. Hugo Slim and Isobel McConnan
A Swiss prince, a glass slipper and the feet of fifteen British aid agencies
A study of DEC agency positions on Humanitarian Principles
October 1998
31. MDM
A case by case analysis of recent crises. Assessing 20 years of humanitarian action
Iraq, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Burundi, the former Zaire, Chechnya and Kosovo
April 1999
32. Hugo Slim
International humanitarianism's engagement with civil war in the 1990s: a glance at evolving practice and theory
A briefing paper for ActionAid UK
December 1997
33. Mark Bowden
Responding to conflict in Africa
February 2001

Annex 2

Disaster response: alternatives to current views

Taken from Tom Lent, Diana Garcia, Rogelio Gomez-Hermosillo and Oscar Jara, *Paradigmas ante Situaciones de Emergencia*, 1998.

'Classical' view	Alternative view
A disaster is a natural event	A disaster is a natural event, the impact of which is determined by the structural conditions of the affected society. Most of the victims are poor
We need to bring material assistance and basic services to the victims	The people affected have their own strengths and capacities to respond
Governments and NGOs have to organise to provide these basic services	Affected populations must reorganise to define their needs, establish services, coordinate with aid providers and negotiate with outside actors around appropriate assistance, and its control
The emphasis is on the short term, and the distribution of material assistance	Planning is not only for the short term, but also for the medium and long, taking into consideration the need for relocation, economic rehabilitation, social and psychological recovery, reform and sustainable development
Aid providers concentrate on problems, needs and weaknesses	Aid providers see problems and needs, but also take into account the capacities of local people, and opportunities to reinforce them
The assessment and analysis are carried out by experts, who are 'objective'	The assessment and analysis are carried out jointly by groups of people and by specialists, who collaborate to ensure that recommendations are being implemented
External interveners try to shape local organizations in their image	Local organisations are seen as a legitimate mobilization of local people to respond to their own problems
The organisations of the affected population might cause political problems	The organisations of the affected population can and must have a say in, and influence over, reconstruction
Reconstruction is a 'return to normal', with the restoration of basic services an important indicator that the objective has been achieved	Reconstruction is an opportunity for reform, to create new forms of life, work and organisation, giving people greater dignity and voice

HPN paper

NGO responses to Hurricane Mitch: evaluations for accountability and learning

Francois Grunewald, Veronique de Geoffrey and Sarah Lister.