

Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties



Report of the follow-up of the TEC evaluation

Concordia, 11 September 2006

On behalf of SHO, PSO and the WUR, Dutch NGOs were invited to deepen the meaning of the results of the TEC evaluation. What were conclusions and recommendations? What do we already do? What are concrete points to follow-up? Aim of this meeting was to learn from the TEC-report; from the outcomes and recommendations, from our discussions about the content, and from each others actions for improvement. Joint learning on behalf of quality improvement of our humanitarian programmes in the SHO context.

Seven central themes

This report is a summary of the proceeds of the meeting. It is build around seven themes we focused on during the day. These themes are based on the conclusions and recommendations of the TEC report.

1. Linking relief - rehabilitation–development: disaster preparedness / disaster management
2. Accountability and participation
3. Needs assessment and knowledge management
4. Working with partners
5. Humanitarian Assistance in the context of conflicts: significance for partner selection and relation with local authorities
6. Fundraising and media
7. Right based approach and gender

Enclosed as background information is the presentation of the TEC Findings, done by Emery Brusset from Channel Research Belgium.

1. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

One of the main conclusions of the TEC Synthesis report is that the link between rehabilitation efforts and wider development trends has not been sufficiently thought through in the Tsunami response. There are two main lessons distinguished in the report:

1. LRRD is not about making a transition from international relief projects to international development projects, but rather about enabling affected people to lead their own recovery from the beginning (page 104). Therefore, the report recommends a fundamental re-orientation to recognise that the ownership of humanitarian assistance rests with the claim-holders. Local capacities are the starting point and the role of other players is to support their efforts and strengthen their capacities to do so. This will require a shift from the emphasis on delivery of goods and services to support and facilitation of local and national capacities (page 110-111). An important aim of these efforts is to ensure long-term sustainable risk reduction.
2. In order to ensure sustainable risk-reduction, all actors should strive to reduce disaster risks and increase disaster response capacities at community, national and international levels, within the framework of local development processes and plans. Support is required in for instance: spatial planning, community-based risk reduction and risk identification, vulnerability reduction measures, institutional support, contingency planning and legal reforms. Support should extend to a wide range of local civil-society organisations including poorer, marginalised groups and specific groups (such as women's associations). International agencies should improve global disaster risk reduction by systematising learning from successful indigenous and other local experience and practices (page 114).

Questions formulated by the group:

- Organisations (NGOs) should focus on those areas where they have most added value and should be aware of their own limitations.
- Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction is not just another activity
- Relief can be supported international, but should be implemented by local organisations.

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:



1. LRRD should be: LD/RR/RRD/RR: RR means risk reduction and disaster preparedness This means mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the whole cycle.
2. Point of discussion is whether we always should work with local partners in LRRD, or whether we better can set up parallel structures to save lives (operational)
3. Schoemaker blijf bij je leest: be aware of your own expertise and limitations: focus on your strengths, stop on time and use expertise of others
4. Is it necessary to develop a code of conduct for the rehabilitation and disaster risk reduction phase?

2. Accountability and participation

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

The TEC study states that both accountability towards affected people as well as their involvement in programmes has been minimal. Accessibility to timely and thorough information regarding the relief and recovery process is necessary for accountability. Yet the TEC report states that there has been a general lack of informing affected people. There were hardly any accountability and complaints mechanisms put in place at the beginning. Accountability towards the public in donor countries was also generally weak, with too much “sanitized” reports being put out to the public (p. 79, synthesis report). Building on local capacities and ensuring participation of all the affected groups (specific attention to women and marginalised groups) was generally poor according to the report. Local ownership in some cases was actually undermined by the flood of international agencies and their control over the (financial) resources. The report also states that participation of affected people was actually higher during the relief phase than during the recovery and rehabilitation phase (p. 75, LRRD report).

The main recommendations for improvement in the report are:

1. Improve transparency through information transfer in accessible language, to all affected people in society, and promoting local “watch-dog” movements and public audits (p. 114 synthesis report).
2. Better accountability and support toward host authorities.
3. Increase participation of all groups in society in all stages of programme implementation and decision-making, and build better on existing local capacities by developing tools and mechanisms to map local capacities and local contexts (p. 113 synthesis report).

Questions formulated by the group:

- There is a disconnection between local partners and the local reality.
- There is a disconnection between pressure to spend and partner capacity.
- The existence of an ombudsman is lacking

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:

Accountability has different meanings and interpretations at different levels. Sometimes there is question of perverse accountability. Management of expectations, both of the beneficiaries and the public is important then. Suggestions for solutions are:

- Appointment of an ombudsman
- The promotion of accountability and participation through from the phase of preparedness up until the whole program cycle
- The question is how we can encourage trustworthiness among local partners to their beneficiaries. Complaints mechanisms should be in place
- Our role should be: support local partners in their access and control over local means. Strengthen local partners' own accountability mechanisms



3. Needs assessment and knowledge management

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

One of the main conclusions of the TEC Synthesis report is that needs-assessments were often not comprehensive geographically or across sectors. The report states that the amount of assessments was sufficient, yet affected people felt they were indeed interviewed but not truly consulted. Assessments that were carried out were not shared amongst agencies. Furthermore, there was a lack of feedback asked of local communities to the needs assessments and no assessment was made of local coping processes (p. 49, synthesis report). Information towards the affected people is seen as generally insufficient and lacking, therefore constraining true accountability and transparency of the (international) response.

Lessons and recommendations that can be derived from the report are:

1. There is a need for more joint agency assessments, surveys and evaluations. The report also recommends that one single database in which all assessment information is registered should be developed, which would be overseen by the UN.
2. Information flows need to be improved both from and to the affected population, giving people the chance to give feedback on the assessments and also making them part of the process.
3. Local and national capacity for needs assessment should be empowered and strengthened, which could take the form of a regional disaster preparedness fund. The report also implies the use of cash-subsidy schemes to give households the means to prioritize their own needs.

Questions formulated by the group:

- We should talk about capacity assessments rather than needs assessments. The assessment should cover beneficiaries, communities and local institutions (community based organisations, NGOs and authorities).
- What is the role of Netherlands NGOs in capacity assessments?

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:

The quality of needs assessment should be improved:

- more co-ordination
- reporting back to the target group
- needs assessment is also part of capacity building
- expectation management
- continuing needs assessment and data collection

Apart from needs assessment, organisations should also do capacity assessment : of beneficiaries, communities (which is really difficult), local government, INGO's and UN.

This should also be done in advance and on a continuous basis in relief, but also in rehabilitation.

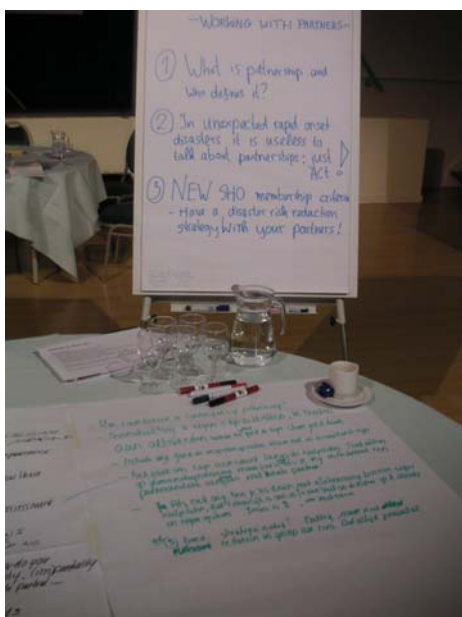
4. Working with partners

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

The report asks specific attention to the problem of “poaching” of staff from local NGOs to international agencies, which effectively had striped many local partner NGOs from their staff capacity. International agencies have not done enough to strengthen and build capacity at their partner organisations. It is stated that existing capacity was “exploited” during the relief stage in such a way that during recovery and rehabilitation it was difficult to find enough capacity to switch into this new mode of working. The report furthermore concludes that some new partnerships with local NGOs seemed to be more like sub-contracts than an actual partnership.

Recommendations and lessons that feature in the report are:

1. There is a need to adapt existing partnership procedures to accommodate more flexibility in reporting and longer time periods of grants.
2. Humanitarian aid needs to shift from a service-delivery approach to a supporting, facilitating and capacity-empowering approach (p. 44, local and national capacities report).
3. Agencies should have clear partnership strategies and build partnerships from the start to avoid problems in the transition from relief to recovery (p. 44, local and national capacities report).



Questions formulated by the group:

1. What is partnership and who defines it?
2. In unexpected rapid onset disasters it is useless to talk about partnership: just act
3. New SHO membership criteria: have a disaster risk reduction strategy with your partners

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:

Ad 1. This is still a relevant question, but it is not sufficiently discussed in groups

Ad 2. Not many SHO members or guest members act in this way, but in case they do, they need to act according to code of conduct principles to deal with local organisations

Ad 3. Have a disaster risk reduction strategy not only with individual partners, but also wider: at all levels. The recommendation is to think in development terms: not delink humanitarian assistance and development.

Mainstream disaster risk reduction in development cooperation, and lobby for it.

5. Humanitarian Assistance in the context of conflicts: significance for partner selection and relation with local authorities

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

One of the criticisms on the evaluation process of the TEC is the scant attention given to the fact that two of the most affected countries are in conflict. This has not been systematically taken into account. The TEC evaluations found that humanitarian capacity that had been built in relation to the conflict was under-utilised. The TEC studies mention that a network of local CBOs that had worked in conflict-affected communities in Aceh, were effectively overlooked by international agencies as prospective partner-organisations. This oversight was only dealt with in late 2005. The relation between the Tsunami response and the prospects for peace are ill-analysed in the reports. It was observed that in Sri Lanka the conflict has heightened after the Tsunami, while Aceh has seen positive change. TEC partly contributes the latter to the presence of aid and the region opening up to the international community (p.68, LRRD report). It does not problematize if and how the Tsunami response affected the conflict in Sri Lanka, except by observing that there was a discrepancy between aid provided to Tsunami affected people and conflict-affected people. Although it is not clear if there is a relation between the Tsunami response and the conflict situation in Sri Lanka, it is clear that there has been a change in attitude towards I/NGOs, with the killing of 17 staff members of Action Contre La Faim in Mutur last August 4 as the most dreadful outcome.

Lesson and recommendation following from the TEC report is: Agencies should pay more attention to building and strengthening capacity, and making use of CBOs and NGOS already working in conflict areas.

Questions formulated by the group:

1. Humanitarian organisations have the moral obligation to structurally integrate in their analysis and programme cycle the subject of conflict and its possible impacts.
2. Compared with the positive recommendations in the TEC report regarding the promotion of local capacities there is the danger that working with local organisations in conflict areas will rather feed the conflict

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:

The position of partners in the conflict should not negatively influence the interventions.

Instruments that can be used to ensure this:

- Apply do no harm principles in the intake phase
- Context monitoring
- Code of Conduct principles in the intake phase
- Monitoring by the donor

6. Fundraising and media

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

The report concludes that the role of the media has been very influential in generating the particular large scale of funding, and in harnessing support from the public for humanitarian issues. The scale of funding available for the Tsunami response meant a contradiction with humanitarian principle of impartiality, when understood as funding only on the basis of needs and equitably distributed (p. 40, report on funding). The report remarks that the initial response was more driven by the available funds than by actual needs, which had its effects on the efficiency of the response.

There are three main lessons distinguished in the report:

- The media and public attention that the Tsunami has drawn towards humanitarian issues should in the future be harnessed to create support for other less-known humanitarian emergencies (p. 39, report on funding).
- Upholding the humanitarian principle of impartiality, should in a future comparable situation have to mean more flexibility in allocating funds and transferring to other humanitarian emergencies (p. 40, report on funding).
- The various national joint fundraising agreements, such as the SHO, is seen as a successful move, but ideally should be complemented by a joint programme implementation scheme and NGO consortia to ensure more effectiveness and better coordination (p. 42, report on funding).

Questions formulated by the group:

1. NGO's should be willing to reallocate surplus funds received from the public to another emergency that received less attention and funds.
2. NGO's should not visibly act according to the taste of the media attention, but should choose 100% for the quality of their interventions.

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:

Ad 1. SHO should be able to change the rules, but need to be very clear about it: maintain flexibility, seek allies in bringing out message (e.g. politicians)

Ad 2. If NGO's want to stay alive, they must improve quality. They should promote the establishment of a more pro-active quality platform. They should develop an information strategy, in which press education and expectation management are central elements.



7. Rights based approach and gender

Main conclusions of TEC Synthesis report:

The report concludes that next to local capacities, international agencies also did not pay sufficient attention to national capacities. The authors of the report on local and national capacities argue for the need to look at a rights-based approach, with which governments can be held accountable for disaster response. This approach would ensure that governments are better prepared for future disasters, which, according to the authors would present a more sustainable way of going about humanitarian aid. Gender is a cross-cutting issue that comes back in most thematic reports, as it is found that women were generally left out of needs assessments, programme implementation, decision-making and information sharing. Mention is also made of neglecting women's capacities, when trying to map a existing local capacities. Most livelihood programmes focussed on restoring men's livelihoods and replacing assets, neglecting areas of trade or markets and in the same time offering the more stereotypical livelihood options for women.

The report lists the following g recommendations and lessons:

1. Agencies need to develop specific strategies for giving full access of information women and marginalized groups, and women should be included in all levels of decision-making (p. 47, report on local and national capacities).
2. There is a need to collect gender-disaggregated data during needs assessments, and support protective measures to prevent gender-based violence in camps.
3. A rights-based approach may go against the idea of a-political humanitarian aid, but leads to more accountable national governments in case of future disasters (p. 40, report on local and national capacities).

Questions formulated by the group:

1. If in the preparedness phase gender is not put high on the agenda of all actors involved, than it will be a lost case
2. The men culture in humanitarian assistance should change
3. There is need to assess the impact of the crisis and of the response on the position and situation of women: evaluation
4. Humanitarian assistance can never be a-political: in this way it legitimises a rights based approach

Statements/ conclusions from discussion:

Already in the preparedness phase RBA and gender should be put high on the agenda of:

- Dutch NGO's
- In the dialogue with partners
- In the relation of the partner with the target group, local government, institutional networks

Findings of impact evaluation should be used as input for the preparedness phase

Concluding words by...

Thea Hilhorst:

A major conclusion for me from the discussion is that working with local partners is in itself no guarantee for a good humanitarian response. Two years ago we had a conference about the code of conduct and concluded there was a need for a serious platform in the Netherlands to discuss issues on the quality of humanitarian aid. The experience with the Tsunami response and findings of the TEC report underwrite the importance to create such a platform.

Anne Pieter as representative of SHO:

The main purpose of this meeting is learning. The meeting provides us with elements to focus on in future debates. Within the SHO there is an upwards movement towards discussing with each other about quality of humanitarian assistance. The meeting provides relevant input for the SHO Tsunami evaluation. The TEC report should be considered as basic document for the SHO evaluation. This evaluation will provide input for the discussion on membership criteria and to the quality debate. Please members and guest members, give your commitment to this evaluation.



TEC Findings: Key Issues

Presentation in The Hague
11 September 2006
Commissioned by PSO

- Channel Research Belgium
- Emery Brusset



Aim & Method of the TEC

- Share learning to improve performance
- Inform the public
- Large steering group including all actors.
- ToR divided between 5 themes, but additional studies tagged on
- Contracting of teams: 12 under five themes, plus UNICEF, France, DEC, NGOs
- A series of coordination meetings and reviews July 05-July 06.

TEC Strengths:

- Comprehensive about aspects of management and impact
- Field based, with participation by all agencies
- Competitive analysis, based on shared data

Weaknesses

- Deadlines originally unrealistic.
- Undefined steering rules and authority in some cases
- Did not look at conflict sensitivity and peace-building impact
- Difficulty in early stage info.

Theme 1: Needs Assessment.

- Evidence base rapidly assembled
- Information was not collected in comparable way, and impeded by institutional barriers
- Information flowed up but not down: nearly universal disempowerment of beneficiaries
- Rapid conversion of information into programming

Capacities

- All agencies adopted philosophy of working locally.
- Overall governance and conflict not badly affected
- Local institutions swept aside and lost credit
- Inability of NGOs to establish intermediary link with “centre”

Coordination

- An operation driven by private funding and NGOs
- No gaps have emerged except at micro-level
- Non-inclusive and unclear roles
- No clear change of coordination regimes since 1994

Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Assistance

- Slow was good
- Links and contiguity were real at policy, planning and delivery levels
- Link to public delivery weaker
- Main constraint was the disaster focus and turnover of staff

Funding

- For the first time resources not an issue
- 13.5 bn \$ (9 bn €) double the usual year
- More than half for the NGOs.
- Needs not the driving force
- GHD not as prevalent as NGO governance issues, yet all actors painted with same brush

Overall

- Capacity and aid governance issues came to the fore
- No crying needs unmet after initial phase
- Not enough contingency capacity in aid effort
- Funding based on trust - but the instruments of trust are not sufficient.

Recommendations

- Reorient humanitarian aid to local capacities
- Reduce institutional barriers
- Increase transparency
- Apply prior quality certification