



UNHCR's response to the Tsunami
emergency in Indonesia and Sri Lanka,
December 2004 - November 2006

An independent evaluation

By Bobby Lambert
bobbylambert@venetia.fsnet.co.uk, and
Caroline Pougin de la Maisonneuve,
caropougin@club-internet.fr

PDES/2007/01
April 2007

Policy Development and Evaluation Service

UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) is committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects and practices. PDES also promotes rigorous research on issues related to the work of UNHCR and encourages an active exchange of ideas and information between humanitarian practitioners, policymakers and the research community. All of these activities are undertaken with the purpose of strengthening UNHCR's operational effectiveness, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to fulfil its mandate on behalf of refugees and other displaced people. The work of the unit is guided by the principles of transparency, independence, consultation, relevance and integrity.

Policy Development and Evaluation Service
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Case Postale 2500
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Tel: (41 22) 739 8249

Fax: (41 22) 739 7344

e-mail: hqpd00@unhcr.org

internet: www.unhcr.org

All PDES evaluation reports are placed in the public domain. Electronic versions are posted on the UNHCR website and hard copies can be obtained by contacting PDES. They may be quoted, cited and copied, provided that the source is acknowledged. The views expressed in PDES publications are not necessarily those of UNHCR. The designations and maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion or recognition on the part of UNHCR concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

Table of Contents

Executive summary	1
Introduction to the evaluation	5
Purpose.....	5
Audience	5
Scope and focus.....	5
Approach, methodology and constraints.....	5
The report.....	6
Acknowledgements	6
Programme review	7
The Tsunami, its impact and UNHCR's response	7
The Indonesia operation	11
The Sri Lanka operation.....	18
Programme analysis	23
Decision making and planning.....	23
Human resource management.....	29
Logistics.....	31
Information technology and telecommunications	33
Security	34
External relations and interagency coordination	35
Role of donors.....	36
Recommendations	37
Annexes	43
1. Acronyms	
2. References	
3. Pictures of shelter types	
4. Terms of reference	

Executive summary

Work on this independent evaluation began on 22 November 2006, with fieldwork taking place from 25 November to 13 December. Its main purpose was “to gain lessons learned for future operations concerning natural disasters.” Since the Tsunami operation, UNHCR has committed itself to the Cluster Approach within the UN by taking the lead in three clusters, Camp Management, Protection and Emergency Shelter. A particular concern was to examine implications of the cluster approach to IDP emergencies.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 26 December 2004 resulted in the loss of 228,000 people with some one million being made homeless in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In the days that followed, UNHCR decided to become involved in a significant way in the humanitarian response. It took on a major role in the provision of shelter, complemented in Sri Lanka by activities in protection and logistics support.

In taking this decision, considerations included firstly, the immediate moral imperative of helping relieve suffering in one of the world’s largest ever disasters, secondly, the longer-term protection imperative of maintaining positive relations with countries where UNHCR needed to carry out its traditional mandate and thirdly the strategic organizational imperative, at a time of UN reform, of indicating a practical organizational capability which would be valued whatever the eventual outcome of such reform.

On the first count, UNHCR made a significant and creditable contribution to the relief of suffering, especially in the emergency and transition phases, though with less success in the later phase. On the second count, UNHCR maintained or enhanced its position with the affected countries, and demonstrated its capability to help in practical ways. On the final count, it has demonstrated considerable strengths, and some significant limitations, notably in permanent shelter. In reviewing its achievements and limitations, it is worth bearing in mind the remarks of Bill Clinton:

There have been major achievements on the long road to recovery....
These achievements are a testament to the extraordinary effort by hundreds of local and international organizations, governments, the private sector, and hundreds of thousands of individuals, from the affected countries and around the world. ... As we have learned in other parts of the world...rebuilding the physical, social and human capital of shattered communities takes years.

From Clinton (2006)

In the emergency phase of its operation, UNHCR provided assistance with emergency shelter to 145,000 people in Indonesia and to 100,000 people in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, in support of the overall humanitarian operation, it also hosted an important inter-agency Logistics Operations Centre.

In Sri Lanka, its transitional shelter coordination work benefited some 275,000 people, with direct provision of transitional shelter to over 20,000 people. It provided important protection services and legal support to 120,000 people and made significant contributions to policy, notably in its successful advocacy for equity between conflict- and Tsunami- affected people. In Indonesia, its work on permanent shelter has, at the time of the evaluation, benefited some 13,000 people, well short of the intended 175,000. Further details are given below.

The circumstances of the response were particularly challenging in Indonesia. A notable feature was the abundance of funding, exceptional for a humanitarian response. Although welcome, this brought some unfamiliar challenges especially in coordination. With their own plentiful funding, NGOs did not have the usual financial incentives to work through UN coordination mechanisms. In Indonesia, UNHCR had a particularly difficult role as the government was very sensitive to the presence of a UN agency with a mandate for the international protection of refugees.

In terms of lessons to be learned, there are five major recommendations:

1. Invest in internal shelter expertise and clarify the focus of UNHCR's shelter interventions

UNHCR's internal capacity in shelter expertise was very limited forcing it to place too much reliance on external consultants. Whilst it performed well in emergency and transitional shelter, it encountered severe problems with permanent shelter. UNHCR needs to invest in internal shelter capacity and to develop its credibility as a leader in shelter. It should clarify its focus in the provision of shelter, which should be on emergency and transitional shelter for all types of major disasters and for internally displaced people as well as refugees. For natural disasters it should be prepared to take primarily a supportive role, although it should be prepared if required, to lead. It should leave permanent shelter to others, whilst liaising with those others.

2. Commit to a truly community-led approach

As with other humanitarian agencies, UNHCR's response would have been even better if it had involved communities more fully in their own relief and rehabilitation. UNHCR should actively seek to reorient its approach to one of facilitating communities' own relief and recovery efforts. This means moving from seeking community participation in UNHCR projects and to exploring how UNHCR can participate in its beneficiaries' projects. It should ensure that in addition to the necessary policy commitment, adequate investment is made in developing operational guidelines and staff skills to translate this into reality in its programmes.

3. Support the "One UN" concept but be realistic

Despite its own commitment, significant difficulties occurred in implementing this concept, notably in logistics. UNHCR should maintain its commitment to the one UN concept, but should not sacrifice its own operational needs in the process. It should ensure it

maintains its own logistics capability until satisfied that it can rely on a co-ordinated inter-agency approach.

4. Learn and apply lessons gained from experience

UNHCR has invested considerably in lesson learning, notably in its commitment to evaluations and reviews. However it has some way to go to ensure that lessons of past interventions are learned and applied. Assessment and monitoring has been weak. It should review its lesson-learning ability and identify actions needed to improve it. It should carry out an audit of lessons-to-be learned, review how such learning is monitored and clarify how those responsible are held accountable. It should review how information from assessments, reviews and evaluations is used in decision-making and planning.

5. Enhance UNHCR's emergency response capacity

Although UNHCR performed relatively well in its response in the emergency phase, significant deficiencies were noted in its rapid response capabilities, deficiencies which had been highlighted in prior reviews. UNHCR should review its emergency response capacity to ensure it is capable of responding quickly and effectively, particularly to sudden onset disasters. In line with the recommendation on lesson-learning, it should address the specific recommendations made in previous reviews and evaluations.

Introduction to the evaluation

1. This evaluation was commissioned by UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES). The evaluation was carried out by two external consultants, Bobby Lambert and Caroline Pougin de la Maisonneuve, both associates of Channel Research, supported by Rika Amano from the Division of External Relations of UNHCR. It was initiated on 22 November 2006, with two days of briefing and preparation at UNHCR's Geneva Headquarters. The team then left on 25 November for Indonesia and Sri Lanka, where they conducted interviews with key informants from UN, NGO and government bodies. They visited several project sites to view examples of what had been delivered and held informal discussions with a number of beneficiaries. The team returned to Geneva on 13 December 2006.

Purpose

2. The main purpose was "to gain lessons learned for future operations", particularly those involving environmental disasters, internally displaced people and the application of the "cluster approach". It follows a recommendation in an External Audit Management Letter. Since the Tsunami operation, UNHCR has committed itself to the cluster approach within the UN by taking the lead in three clusters, Camp Management, Protection and Emergency Shelter. Rather than compile an exhaustive list of detailed recommendations, the evaluators were requested to identify a small number of major recommendations. The full Terms of Reference are appended to this report.

Audience

3. The main audience for the evaluation is UNHCR senior management, particularly those responsible for policy and strategy. It has some important messages for UNHCR donors and supporters and for UNHCR partner agencies, particularly those involved in the cluster approach. In line with good practice and UNHCR policy, it will be available as a public document.

Scope and focus

4. The evaluation is intended to complement other external evaluations, notably that of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition and internal operational reviews and audits. Whilst UNHCR's involvement in the Tsunami covered Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Somalia, the evaluation was not asked to deal with the last country. The focus of the evaluation is on UNHCR's shelter activities; however reference is also made to its work on protection and logistics coordination and support.

Approach, methodology and constraints

5. Bearing in mind the purpose of supporting lesson-learning, a qualitative approach was adopted. The methods included interviews with key informants,

review of documentation and field visits. The impact on beneficiaries was a primary consideration and the evaluation included visits and informal discussions with a small number of beneficiaries.

6. A constraint was that for reasons of timing and resources, it was not possible to carry out a systematic, formal survey of the views of beneficiaries. This is important given one of the key recommendations of this report, and that of other evaluations such as that of the TEC, about the importance of a community led approach.

The report

7. The report is structured around three major sections, a general Programme Review, a more detailed Programme Analysis and a set of Recommendations. A draft of the report was circulated for comment to a selection of informants and their comments have been taken on board by the evaluators. To keep within the agreed length of the report, it has been necessary to keep discussion and comment to a minimum.

Acknowledgements

8. The authors would like to acknowledge the support and facilitation of UNHCR staff in all aspects of the evaluation. In their interviews and in their travels to all of the offices visited, they received a warm and constructive welcome. In particular they would like to acknowledge the untiring efforts of the administrative staff who organized their itineraries and the skill and patience of the many drivers who ferried them from location to location. Thanks are due to the PDES and to Rika Amano for her patience and perseverance in supporting the team throughout the process. Finally thanks to those who commented on the draft report.

9. The views and findings in the report are those of the evaluators.

Programme review

The Tsunami, its impact and UNHCR's response

10. On 26 December 2004, an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred off the west coast of northern Sumatra in Indonesia. It was followed by powerful aftershocks, ranging from 6.3 to 7.0, which caused Tsunamis up to 10 metres in height which struck the Indonesian island of Sumatra, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives before reaching Somalia. In Indonesia, three months after the Tsunami, another large earthquake occurred on Nias Island, off the coast of Sumatra.

11. In total some than 228,000 people were lost (see Table 1) and an estimated 1.5 million displaced. In Indonesia more than 167,000 people were killed and 570,000 made homeless. In Sri Lanka, 35,000 deaths were registered and some 480,000 made homeless. At this time there was already 345,000 people displaced by the conflict in northern Sri Lanka.

Table 1 Impact of Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka

	Lost (1)	Homeless (2)
Indonesia	167,540	570,000
Sri Lanka	35,322	480,000
Others	25,036	N/A

(1) Dead or Missing (Telford J & Cosgrave J 2006)

(2) From EM-DAT (2007) & UNHCR sources

12. This massive natural disaster triggered a huge global public response and a commitment of funds which allowed the humanitarian community to respond without the usual funding constraints. Four days after the Tsunami occurred, on 30 December 2004, the UN Secretary-General requested all UN agencies to unite their efforts to respond to this large scale emergency. The UN Flash Appeal was released on 6 January 2005.

The role of UNHCR

13. Although it has experience in responding to natural disasters, this is not part of UNHCR's mandate. However in this case, given the UN Secretary General's call, the magnitude of the devastation and its presence on the ground, UNHCR decided to get involved in the Tsunami operation. Its response focused on Indonesia (in the Sumatran province of Aceh, formally known as Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, NAD) and Sri Lanka with a small amount of support to Somalia. UNHCR's financial requirements in the Flash Appeal were for US\$ 60 million for Indonesia (for an initial six month period), US\$ 15.3 million for Sri Lanka and US\$ 0.5 million for Somalia (for the first three months).

14. As UNHCR was already operational in Sri Lanka, its involvement in the Tsunami operation was straightforward and welcomed by the GoSL. In Indonesia,

the context for UNHCR's response was considerably more sensitive. UNHCR had a Regional Office¹ in Indonesia, and its main role within the country was to provide a framework for the processing of asylum seekers who arrive in Indonesia. It had never worked in Sumatra before the Tsunami. The situation in Aceh was particularly sensitive because of the 30-year conflict with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) fighting for independence and an outflow of Acehnese to Malaysia where they approached UNHCR seeking protection. A peace agreement was finally signed between the Government and GAM on 15 August 2005.

15. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR assisted more than 100,000 people with non-food items (NFI), focusing on the east and north and certain southern districts. The emergency response in Somalia targeted 40,000 people with NFI on the coastal part of Puntland. The emergency response in Indonesia targeted 100,000 people in some 20 locations along the west coast of Aceh.

16. Moving beyond the emergency response, at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka, UNHCR agreed to lead in the shelter sector at a national level over a period of one year. It focused its programme on transitional shelter, taking on a coordination role at national level complemented by a role in direct provision of shelter. It also played a major role in protection activities, notably in assisting with lost documentation, the provision of legal aid and in advocating on certain policy issues such as equity for all displaced people. UNHCR concluded its involvement in the Sri Lankan Tsunami response in December 2005.

17. In Indonesia, at the request of the UN Country Team (UNCT), UNHCR also agreed to lead on shelter. The government was sensitive about UNHCR's mandate for the protection of refugees, pointing out that there were no refugees in Aceh. UNHCR did not engage in any refugee protection related activities.

18. Under pressure from the government, UNHCR withdrew from Aceh on 25 March 2005, the day before the officially declared end of the emergency phase. It returned three months later following the signature of an MoU with the government on 10 June with a commitment to keep a low profile. This absence and the requirement for a low profile on return had a major impact on its work. UNHCR continued its work on Tsunami related activities until November 2006.

19. It is worth mentioning that UNHCR's intervention in the Tsunami was prior to the set-up of the UN clusters and the designation of UNHCR as a cluster lead for Emergency Shelter, Protection and Camp Management.

The decision to engage

20. In the days following the Tsunami, as the scale of the disaster became clear, and with such a disaster outside its mandate, UNHCR had to make a policy decision about whether and to what extent it should get involved. The 'Good Offices' role of the High Commissioner for Refugees can be invoked on the basis of a call from the UN Secretary General, and allows the agency to assume an international mandate to assist Internally Displaced People.

¹ The Regional Office covers Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, Singapore and Timor Leste.

21. The scale of the disaster and the public outcry justified that UNHCR assume such a mandate. In consultation with its UN sister agencies, and given the need and its past experience, UNHCR quickly decided to get involved and take a lead on shelter. This decision involved immediate moral, longer term protection and organizational strategic considerations.

Immediate moral considerations

22. UNHCR could, and should, contribute to the relief of human suffering on a very large scale. On this count, by channelling additional resources, providing technical expertise, and extending the UN coordination umbrella, UNHCR made a significant contribution to the relief of suffering of a large number of people, amounting to almost 300,000 in the emergency phase and several hundred thousand in the recovery phase (see Table 2 below).

Longer term protection considerations

23. By getting involved, UNHCR could enhance its ability to act in its mandated areas of refugee protection. A decision not to provide significant assistance could have jeopardised its ability to do this in the future. In Sri Lanka, its successful intervention meant that UNHCR's well established position was enhanced – and it would almost certainly have been damaged had it not got involved in a meaningful way. This is particularly important given the recent deterioration in the security situation and the continued need for UNHCR's protection activities.

24. In Indonesia, UNHCR was in a more sensitive position, particularly due to the security situation in Aceh. It was keen to position itself to be able to respond to the possible return of Acehnese refugees from Malaysia in the event that the disaster provided a window of opportunity for peace. Its role in the early stages of the response enhanced its position in the country. The sensitive manner in which it handled its withdrawal from, and return to Aceh, avoided any major pitfalls.

Strategic organizational considerations

25. Over recent years, there has been a significant drop in the global number of refugees, UNHCR's traditional beneficiaries. In parallel, there has been a rise in the number and impact of natural disasters and in the numbers of internally displaced people. In the days following the Tsunami there was huge support, and pressure, for a response from all humanitarian actors, backed up by an unprecedented injection of funding.

26. In this context and at a time of considerable change within the UN system, UNHCR could demonstrate that it had a good capability to deliver practical assistance and could help point the way to a future role within any reformed system. Overall UNHCR has demonstrated considerable capability to deliver, both in its protection mandate and in the area of emergency and transitional shelter. It has also demonstrated some areas where it should not get involved (permanent shelter) and where it needs to develop its relationships with key partner agencies.

UNHCR's strengths and limitations

27. Having taken the decision to get involved in a major way, and having moved onto an emergency footing, it then took some time to clarify what this role should be, to communicate this and to get full acceptance by all relevant UNHCR staff, particularly for its involvement in longer term shelter provision. Once the organization moved into an emergency response mode, it performed well. Key factors in the success of this response include:

- the comparatively² strong operationally responsive culture within the organization;
- the leadership and commitment shown by key individuals;
- the existence of significant stockpiles of shelter and related items which could be rapidly deployed;
- its internal logistics expertise and network of contacts, (e.g. the mobilisation of the Swiss helicopters);
- the existence of an emergency roster and well-tries stand-by arrangements with partners such as RedR-Australia;

28. In the context of this broadly successful response, there is nevertheless considerable room for improvement, especially if UNHCR plans to be able to mount successful shelter responses in future disasters. This is discussed further in the recommendations section.

29. Table 2 below gives a picture of the assistance provided by UNHCR from November 2006 using an overview of selected data. These data are primarily related to outputs (items delivered) – and do not necessarily reflect the more important aspect of outcomes and impact on beneficiaries.

² Within the UN

Table 2 Overview of assistance provided by UNHCR in Tsunami Response (1)

Nature of assistance	Units	Nos.	Notes
INDONESIA			
Emergency NFI	Beneficiaries	145,000	Aceh & Nias Support to sector in emergency phase 580 permanent houses in Aceh & Nias Support for reconstructing 2,000 houses - ditto - - ditto - Coordination of emergency shelter Temporary shelter & coastal design
Shelter coordination		unspecified	
Permanent shelter	Beneficiaries	2,900	
Nias shelter materials:	Beneficiaries	10,000	
Nias - timber supply	Cubic metres	8,000	
Nias - roofing sheets	Square metres	180,000	
Shelter Coordination		unspecified	
Technical advice and support		unspecified	
SRI LANKA			
Emergency NFI	Beneficiaries	100,000	55,000 transitional shelters Provision of transitional 4,500 shelters Support to sector Support to conflict IDPs
Shelter Coordination	Beneficiaries	275,000	
Shelter Provision	Beneficiaries	22,500	
Protection, survey, legal support	Beneficiaries	120,000	
Logistics Operations Centre		unspecified	
Publication of Equity Paper		unspecified	
SOMALIA			
Emergency NFI		40,000	

(1) Data compiled by evaluators principally from UNHCR internal reports and public information

The Indonesia operation

30. In Indonesia, UNHCR adopted a two-pronged approach, involving the provision of emergency shelter and, in parallel, the implementation of a permanent shelter programme. It is notable that it did not include transitional shelter in its programme, primarily because the government announced in January 2005 that it was setting up temporary accommodation centres throughout Aceh through the construction of wooden barracks. The emergency shelter operation was judged to be a significant success. The decision not to become involved in transitional shelter affected both the immediate welfare of the Tsunami survivors and had significant negative implications on the permanent shelter solutions.

31. The permanent shelter operation in Aceh experienced many problems and delivery has been far lower than the original targets. However, costs for housing units are broadly in line with comparable agencies. While local contractor capacity may have been enhanced to some extent, the level of community engagement has

been limited and much less than that originally planned. On Nias, there was more success with the construction of permanent shelter with a good level of community involvement. The procurement and supply of timber and roofing sheets was a very useful contribution.

Emergency shelter in Indonesia

32. The provision of emergency shelter was generally successful. UNHCR provided shelter materials and non-food relief items for some 100,000 beneficiaries (or over one-fifth of the estimated 500,000 displaced). This included the distribution of 16,000 tents, almost 100,000 blankets and a range of other NFI. The operation was concluded in less than three months and involved the deployment of around 65 additional international staff for periods of one or more months.

Box 1 Shelter Terminology

There is considerable variation in the terms used to describe shelter in humanitarian crises and the terms will vary from location to location. Below is a brief explanation of some the terms used in this report, with indicative cost estimates. For a more complete description of transitional shelter options, see Corsellis & Vitale, 2005. See appendix for pictures of different shelter types

Transitional Shelter: As a general term this covers shelter which “provides a habitable covered living space.. over the period between a ... disaster and achieving a durable shelter solution.” (Corsellis & Vitale 2005). This can include emergency or temporary shelter. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, this term was also used to describe family shelter units, designed to last several years. Indicative costs in Sri Lanka were US\$ 250 - 500 per family. In Indonesia, the UNORC/IFRC transitional shelter units were estimated to cost in the region of US\$ 4,000 per unit.

Emergency Shelter: Meeting immediate shelter needs for a period of some weeks to several months. Typically involves the supply of temporary shelter materials such as tents and plastic sheeting. Indicative costs US\$ 50-100 per family.

Temporary Shelter: May include the use of public buildings such as mosques, churches and schools. Also includes specially built temporary living centres (“barracks” in Indonesia, and often built by the military). Such communal shelters are generally unpopular with displaced people and humanitarian agencies. Indicative costs US\$ 100 - 500 / family.

33. A further emergency response was made following the earthquake on Nias Island on 28 March 2005. Emergency shelter was provided for some 45,000 people, involving the distribution of some 9,000 tents and associated NFI. UNHCR also provided coordination of the emergency shelter response in Aceh. The overall expenditure on both the Aceh and Nias emergency shelter operations was close to US\$ 10 million.

34. The impact of these emergency shelter measures on the lives of some 145,000 people was significant in enabling them to survive in the weeks and months after the Tsunami. The success of this operation was related strongly to UNHCR’s experience

both in the provision of emergency shelter and to its capabilities in emergency response, built up over many years.

35. On a technical note, whilst UNHCR's lightweight tent (some 2,000 units supplied) proved successful in these conditions, many of the other tents performed poorly and deteriorated within several months.

Permanent shelter in Indonesia

36. The permanent shelter programme has been much more problematic, an experience UNHCR shares with many other agencies. UNHCR's plans in the Flash Appeal were for the rebuilding/rehabilitating of 35,000 permanent houses (in three different categories as outlined below). At the time of the evaluation, less than 700 houses had actually been completed (with a further 400 in various stages of construction). Support was provided for a further 2,000 houses. There was limited success in adopting a community focused approach.

37. The scale of need was very large. Initial government estimates were of 127,000 houses destroyed and a further 152,000 seriously damaged by the Tsunami, with overall damage assessed at some US\$ 1.4 billion. In Nias, following the earthquake a further 15,000 houses were destroyed and 19,000 badly damaged. Subsequently the numbers of houses needing rebuilding was adjusted downwards to some 110,000, and then to 75,000.

38. It was also clear that there was a strong desire amongst the displaced people to rebuild their homes as quickly as possible. Funding was available on an unprecedented scale. Spurred on by the media attention, there was a strong desire amongst the international community for quick results. Someone had to take on the task of reconstruction and the aid agencies on the ground were quick to take up the challenge. In many cases they were too quick, given their lack of expertise and experience in this area.

39. UNHCR decided to design and implement a permanent shelter programme based on the three pillars of:

- community participation;
- a comprehensive approach to rebuilding communities (not just houses);
- inter-agency co-operation to achieve this through joint programming for a distinct geographic area.

40. It had an anticipated budget from the flash appeal of US\$ 53million and an estimate of unit costs of US\$ 1,500 per unit for repair and reconstruction (linked to previous experience in both East Timor and West Timor). Using these figures, a programme covering 35,000 housing units was envisaged through the provision of:

- new housing on either pre-existing or new sites in coastal communities;
- additional rooms for existing houses where host families agree to take in survivors of a relative's family;

- shelter kits for partially damaged houses.

41. In the end, UNHCR focused only on new housing, which had a much higher unit cost than the other two options. Logistical difficulties, rising fuel costs and design modifications requested by the beneficiary communities pushed the average budgeted price per unit up to some US\$ 7,300.

42. In Nias, following its emergency response, UNHCR became involved in the provision of permanent shelter solutions. It undertook to assist in supply of timber, with an original preliminary estimated need of 20,000 cubic metres, to meet the reconstruction plans of a range of agencies. It also undertook to assist with the reconstruction of 300 houses in three sunken villages which had been inundated by the sea.

43. The implementation of the programme in Aceh was to be by local contractors, managed by technical staff seconded from RedR Australia, with the intention of supporting the local economy and of building local capacity.

44. In November 2006, almost two years after it embarked on its permanent shelter project, the following has been delivered:

- In Aceh, the completion of some 430 houses out of a final contracted number of 1,100. The balance is planned to be completed in 2007 under the auspices of BRR, with funds provided through UNHCR. Unit costs are estimated to be above US\$ 7,300, in line with other agency costs but considerably less than some.
- The completion of some 230 houses on Nias Island, through its implementing partner AMDA.
- The supply of almost 8,000 cubic metres of timber and 180,000 square meters of corrugated iron roofing sheets, sufficient for 2,000 houses, to assist in reconstruction on Nias Island.
- Technical advice and support in a number of areas including permanent shelter and coastal design and mitigation.

45. As planned, UNHCR ended its presence in Aceh in November 2006. The job of completing the unfinished houses was handed over to BRR. Thus, in addition to its role in co-ordinating the reconstruction efforts, BRR extended its role in actual delivery, a role they had already taken on in early 2006 due to pressures on them from central government to deliver faster reconstruction. Such a dual role is a difficult one for any organization and will pose a considerable challenge for BRR.

46. The delivery of permanent shelter has fallen well short of the original targets. It should be noted that the targets themselves and the time-scale should have been reviewed much earlier and much greater clarity provided (see box 2). Even allowing for an extended timeframe and the fact that the original target may have included repairs and extensions as well as reconstruction, the housing reconstruction/repair is well short of the original target of 35,000 housing units. It is also well short of those subsequent targets identified in the August 2005 plan of operation.

47. Although short of the preliminary estimate made by the shelter agencies in Nias (which was in retrospect an overestimate), the timber supplied to Nias satisfied most of the unmet needs and the supply of corrugated iron sheeting was a very useful contribution. This logistics exercise demonstrated flexibility, and a commitment to an integrated approach.

48. While the use of local contractors benefited the local economy, the management problems experienced (discussed below) meant that there was little scope for capacity building within the contractors. Once the decision was taken to use contractors, the option of a self-build approach was effectively closed off.

Box 2 Targets and time-scale – need for clarity

Although the Flash Appeal contained a budget for 35,000 houses at a unit cost of US\$ 1,500, there was a need to clarify the scope and time-scale of the permanent shelter programme as the needs were better assessed. Some documents indicate that this target included repairs to damaged houses, extensions to host family houses, and new-build houses. Although it became clear early in 2005 that UNHCR could not build 35,000 new build houses, the 35,000 estimate persisted and became associated with the reconstruction of permanent houses. It was used in a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the government in June 2005 (at the insistence of the government) almost six months after the Tsunami. In August 2005, a plan of operation (UNHCR August 2005) outlined the following deliverables:

1. Pilot Project in Krueng Sabee, covering 1,022 houses
2. In Calang, provision of 2,413 houses
3. Support for design of 1,000 housing units for the public rental sector in Banda Aceh
4. Timber supply for Nias, estimate of up to 9,902 cubic metres
5. Shelter Provision for three submerged villages, number unspecified.

Although mention was made of pilot projects, the intention was still to continue with the construction of as many permanent houses as the available funding would allow. The final target for Aceh appears to be the contracted figure of 1,100 houses.

On timescale, it has been difficult for the evaluators to establish what was intended – or how it might have changed. The original UNHCR flash appeal mentioned the need for US\$ 60 million in the first six months while other internal documents indicated that the permanent shelter was expected to come on stream after two years, with completion some time after that.

In the initial aftermath of the disaster one can understand that some very quick estimates had to be made. However, although revisions to these early estimates were made in internal strategy documents, they were not communicated externally.

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluation, it is very difficult to form a judgement on the effectiveness of the intervention, when the objectives are not clear.

49. The success in generating real community participation has been limited. Despite a considerable investment of time and effort, there has been little real community involvement or ownership over the housing provided in Aceh. There has

been more success in this aspect on Nias due to the strong commitment by AMDA to a community-led approach. Related to the problems in achieving real community participation, the focus in Aceh moved firmly towards the completion of the physical structures of the houses, constructed by contractors for, rather than by, the community.

50. Related to the above, the desire to make a significant contribution to helping rebuild communities, and not just houses, has met with very limited success.

51. Although recognised as a particular problem, addressing the shelter needs of those who had not previously owned property (the renters) proved particularly complex and difficult to address.

Transitional shelter in Indonesia

52. UNHCR did not get involved to a significant extent in either the delivery or the coordination of transitional shelter. Initially the provision of transitional shelter was largely left to the government, to whom UNHCR provided some sound technical advice on the design and layout of the temporary living centres – a useful if limited intervention. This contrasts with the approach adopted in Sri Lanka, where UNHCR focused on emergency and transitional shelter, leaving permanent shelter to others.

53. As it became clear that the provision of permanent shelter would take much longer than was originally envisaged, and as the condition of the emergency shelters deteriorated, it became necessary to implement a transitional shelter programme. This was initiated by UNORC in September 2005 and implemented by IFRC for some 20,000 shelters with the intention of completing 50% by Christmas 2005 and the balance by the end of March 2006. This programme also faced delays in terms of importation and distribution of materials, and some transitional shelters were still being built almost a year later.

54. The lack of provision of transitional shelter had a number of significant consequences:

- As the emergency shelter deteriorated after a few months, living conditions for beneficiaries became very poor;
- When eventually it became clear that the transitional shelter planned by the government would not be enough, it was then very late;
- The inadequate provision for transitional shelter increased pressure on the permanent shelter programme to deliver results, with inevitable pressure to hurry the planning phase. This pressure to deliver was an important factor in deciding to use contractors, rather than a community-led approach;
- The late implementation of the transitional shelter programme ruled out the possibility of integrating it into the permanent shelter programme.

In Indonesia the (TEC) evaluation found a general lack of foresight and strategic thinking... with respect to shelter provision. ... the outstanding requirement for assistance to those in temporary dwellings was neglected until it became a “crisis”, Bennet (2006).

55. The difficulties faced by the government to construct adequate transitional shelter and the long delays in building permanent shelter could have been foreseen by the key shelter actors, including UNHCR, and should have triggered a commitment to the provision of transitional shelter. This lack of initial involvement in the transitional shelter phase was a major error on the part of the key shelter actors, including UNHCR which had a lead role. This is discussed further below.

Discussion

56. UNHCR is not unique in the problems it experienced in its permanent shelter programme. Many, if not most, agencies operating in Aceh, encountered similar problems.

57. As mentioned above, UNHCR faced some unique operational constraints due to its sensitive relations with the government. This led to the situation whereby other agencies pressured UNHCR to take a lead role, while the central government preferred UNHCR to have a limited role. This eventually led to UNHCR's withdrawal from Aceh in late March 2005 for three months and the subsequent requirement on return for a very low profile. The withdrawal and return effectively meant a second start-up in Aceh. The requirement for a low profile limited the area of operation of UNHCR staff to Banda Aceh, with only RedR consultants and national staff in the project sites.

58. UNHCR had not previously operated in this part of Indonesia and then chose to operate in some of the most inaccessible areas of Aceh, where other agencies were absent and the need was great.

59. In the weeks and months after the Tsunami, as would be expected after a major disaster, the situation was evolving rapidly. As humanitarian assistance was provided, as the scale of funding available became clear, as people recovered from the grief and trauma of their loss, needs and perceptions altered quickly. A key requirement was for sufficient time for the grieving process. In short there was a need for a transition phase. It is striking that very different approaches to this transition phase were adopted in Sri Lanka and Indonesia although both were managed through one Bureau in Geneva (see discussion below).

60. As with many other agencies, UNHCR had little previous experience in the provision of permanent shelter on such a scale. It had little in-house expertise in shelter, other than in the provision of emergency shelter materials.

61. Agencies were operating in an environment of unhealthy “competitive compassion” as discussed by de Ville deGoyet & Morinère, 2006. There was a desire to get quick results, with a strong perception of donor pressure, and inter-agency competition to stake out territory and claim beneficiaries for their programme. In this

environment many agencies made commitments to provide housing which they were unable to fulfil.

62. Similarly, with no agreement on common standards, agencies often attempted to outbid each other by promising houses with higher specifications or quicker build-times than their “competitors”. Unsurprisingly, beneficiaries would often vote with their feet and move from one agencies’ list to another.

The Sri Lanka operation

63. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR adopted a phased approach, consisting of an initial emergency response, an extended response in the transition phase and a much reduced response in the longer term rehabilitation phase. The initial emergency response was generally successful, especially in the distribution of non-food relief items and in the running of the logistics centre, although the procurement and distribution of tents was much less so.

64. UNHCR’s involvement in transitional shelter was successful, both in the coordination at a national level of over 55,000 shelters and in the direct provision of 4,500 shelters. UNHCR took a strong decision to phase out after the transitional shelter, and saw this decision through with resolve. Similarly UNHCR’s protection activities were successful. The impact of the response on the beneficiary community was very positive in the initial emergency phase and was sustained through the transition phase.

65. As a result of the work on standards and quality, this impact is likely to continue in the years ahead as the transitional shelters are of good quality and should last a number of years. Local response capacity, including national and local government and NGOs, was enhanced.

Emergency response

66. Immediately after the Tsunami, UNHCR released non-food relief items from its in-country stockpile. Its emergency shelter response served some 100,000 people and made a significant contribution to the humanitarian intervention. Within days, UNHCR also set up and then successfully ran, as a joint UN effort, a Logistics Operations Centre (LOC) to co-ordinate aid distribution. UNHCR also arranged for the importation of some 2,500 tents, an operation that met with very mixed results.

67. Despite a few problems and setbacks, UNHCR’s emergency response was largely successful and played a significant part in the broad humanitarian response. Quick and decisive leadership, particularly at country level, was a key success factor.

Response in the transitional phase

68. UNHCR assisted the government in carrying out a survey on displaced, missing, injured or presumed dead. Working with others, it supported legal clinics in affected districts, assisting in replacing lost documentation for some 120,000 people. Through the Norwegian Refugee Council it ran six legal aid centres in affected areas. Public information campaigns were conducted on sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR made a significant contribution to simplifying procedures on land and property rights.

69. Working with partner agencies, UNHCR initiated an influential paper, published on 1 December 2005, on equity for all displaced people whether displaced through conflict or the Tsunami. The recommendations of this paper, notably an agreement to spend part of the Tsunami funding on conflict IDPs, were broadly accepted by the donors, to the benefit of the affected communities.

70. Within days of the Tsunami, UNHCR took a lead role in supporting the government in co-ordinating the shelter response through its Transitional Accommodation Project, which oversaw the construction of some 55,000 shelters. A key achievement was the development (agreed on 16 January 2005) and dissemination of a transitional shelter strategy including the setting of standards for shelters, taking into account international standards such as SPHERE.

71. In addition to its coordination role, UNHCR took direct responsibility for the construction of 6,550 shelters, subsequently reduced to 4,000, to be implemented through partner agencies. Although somewhat slow to get going, this programme delivered 4,500 high quality transitional shelters, which are expected to last several years.

72. In November 2005, having given advanced notification on several occasions, UNHCR completed its work on transitional shelter and handed over to the Government. Despite the advanced notification, it was four months before IOM took over in this area. This was related to the volatile political situation - at this time the government was preoccupied with the election campaign which led to a change of government.

73. Despite some of the concerns about the speed of provision, UNHCR's response in the transitional phase was broadly successful, both at the coordination level and in the direct provision of shelter.

Response in the longer-term

74. In the shelter policy that UNHCR established in Sri Lanka, it made it clear that it would not get engaged in permanent shelter. However, it took active steps to liaise with those who were working in this area. Its focus on standards and quality and the success with the transitional shelter programme, meant that agencies involved in permanent shelter were given adequate time to prepare and implement a well designed programme.

75. UNHCR has continued its involvement in the shelter sector through its collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council in a Shelter Coordination Cell, officially launched in December 2006, with the aim of ensuring that where the need arises, adequate emergency shelter can be provided. With the recent deterioration in the security situation in Sri Lanka and the rapid rise in IDPs, this role is very relevant, and it is important that the lessons from the Tsunami response are learned.

Discussion

76. In Sri Lanka at the time of the Tsunami, UNHCR was in a benign operational environment. It had positive and well established relationships with the Government and other key actors, such as the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and with a wide range of NGOs. Its public profile was comparatively low, being related mainly to the protection of internally displaced in the North and East of the country.

77. The country's coping mechanisms survived relatively intact, with local communities able to provide immediate support to their stricken colleagues. The economy continued to function, there was strong public support for the Tsunami response and access to most parts of the affected areas was good, or quickly restored.

78. The President displayed considerable leadership in tackling the crisis. Of particular note was the crucial role played by her special representative, Mr Tilak Ranivaraja, in leading and co-ordinating the shelter recovery and reconstruction efforts.

79. Against this generally benign environment, a key challenge faced by UNHCR was the rapid and unavoidable changes of the UNHCR country representative, as discussed below.

80. The success achieved was strongly dependent on the determination and leadership of some key individuals and the support received from partner agencies and donors. This determination and leadership were needed in the face of ambivalence in certain quarters within UNHCR about whether or not it should have taken on this role and a tendency, in the initial period, for some senior management to distance themselves from the shelter project.

81. Whilst the involvement in the Logistics Operational Centre was generally seen as a success, UNHCR's internal logistics capability is very limited, particularly in relation to staffing. Because many of UNHCR's operations depend heavily on logistics, this function cannot be outsourced to other organizations. Unless action is taken, this will deteriorate further.

82. There was a strong perception at field level that the pressure to "get results" was driven more by donor or project financial and reporting requirements than by the needs on the ground. This was evident for example in the comments of the risk assessment mission in May 2005 and in the responses to them.

83. There was reasonable success in taking account of community views in shelter provision. UNHCR was well established in the country, had a long involvement with protection issues and a significant number of its own staff were from affected communities. This meant that it was well placed to have a good general understanding of community needs.

84. The success of the transitional shelter programme allowed those agencies involved in permanent shelter the time to develop community based approaches. However, there were some major gaps, notably in giving voice to the expressed needs of and in information-sharing with affected communities. UNHCR took some steps to address these issues, such as the rapid assessment conducted with UNICEF in

February 2005. However it is unclear how much this assessment actually affected programme planning,

Programme analysis

Decision making and planning

85. On 29 December 2004, three days after the Tsunami, UNHCR initially decided to get involved in relief operations at a modest level of US\$ 7.8 million for Indonesia. This early decision for a low level of involvement was because natural disasters are not part of UNHCR's mandate and, at the time, there was still a lot of confusion and lack of information regarding the scale and extent of the devastation. On 30 December, the UN Secretary General together with the IASC requested all UN agencies to respond to this major disaster.

86. Following this emergency call, the Deputy High Commissioner confirmed that UNHCR should "think big" in relation to its response and therefore increased the level of its intervention. On 31 December 2004, the High Commissioner made a Declaration of Emergency (DoE). On 2 January 2005, OCHA informed all agencies that, in view of the fact that pledges of international assistance were already approaching US\$ 1 billion, agencies should include in the Flash Appeal "initial, focused recovery projects and their funding requirements".

87. As a result, and after consultation between Jakarta and Headquarters and between UNHCR Jakarta and the UN Country Team, UNHCR's budget was increased to US\$ 40 million to include shelter reconstruction. On 4 January, the UN Resident Coordinator requested UNHCR to further increase its permanent shelter budget. On 6 January 2005, the UN Flash Appeal was released with UNHCR's requirements being US\$ 60 million for Indonesia and US\$ 15 million for Sri Lanka.

88. UNHCR's response to the emergency phase both in Indonesia and Sri Lanka benefited from its long experience in conflict situations and refugee crises: in particular it had considerable stockpiles of NFIs and staff with considerable experience in emergency operations.

89. Given the circumstances (a natural disaster occurring between Christmas and New Year when the majority of staff was on leave), UNHCR acted quickly and decisively to launch the rapid assistance response with a coherent and appropriate approach.

90. However, the Indonesian and Sri Lankan offices of UNHCR had to launch their emergency operations on 29 December 2004, two days before the Declaration of Emergency on 31 Dec 2004. As the DoE is an important measure enabling the organization to respond quickly to a major emergency, it would have been helpful for the initial response if the DoE could have been made earlier. The emergency operation also had to be launched during the period when all financial accounts were closed and when no petty cash was available.

Indonesia

91. The decision to go for a two-pronged approach, consisting of emergency shelter and permanent shelter, was made in the very early days of the response. Transitional shelter was not included in this approach, aside from some valuable assistance given to the government on the design of barracks and the layout of temporary living centres.

92. On permanent shelter, the planning assumptions in the Flash Appeal had been to support 35,000 families (175,000 people) with a budgeted unit cost of US\$ 1,500 per shelter. As the emergency shelter response got underway, the decision was taken to provide permanent shelter along the west coast of Aceh (the most devastated and inaccessible area).

93. The decision and planning were made rapidly following discussions with the Indonesian Government. It reflected UNHCR's responsiveness to the beneficiaries expressed desire to be relocated in permanent houses as soon as possible. These objectives were confirmed in writing by the UNCT on the 4 January 2005. However, the relevance and appropriateness of this decision-making and planning are questioned when considering the following issues:

- The target figure of 35,000 units was based on the budget in the Flash Appeal and initial cost estimates from experience in both West and East Timor³. The urgent planning process was unable to adequately take into account UNHCR's implementation capacity or previous experience in permanent shelter.
- The lack of knowledge and experience of the local context (conflict, social, economic and cultural aspects) and the logistical challenges were underestimated.
- People affected by natural disaster need a transition period to mourn and digest the trauma before they are in a position to properly think about and actively contribute to the recovery process. This need for a psychological transition period was underestimated in initial permanent shelter plans while the beneficiaries' capacity to get effectively involved in the early stages was overestimated. UNHCR's re-entry to Aceh several months later gave more time to consider this and led to a realization that survivors' expectations had changed.

94. A decision had to be made about how the programme was to be implemented. Because of the desire to move quickly, there was pressure to make a quick decision. The broad options were between some form of a community-based approach and a contractor-based approach, either local to Aceh or external. After considerable reflection and discussion the decision was taken to use local contractors. Key considerations were that that using contractors would help support the local economy, would be a quicker way of delivering the physical housing than adopting a

³ UNHCR's previous experience in East Timor: US\$ 700 to 800/unit. Considering the level of devastation and some logistical constraints, the cost for housing in NAD was estimated at US\$ 1,500. A total of US\$ 7.5 million was earmarked for the emergency phase leaving US\$ 52.5 million for the permanent shelter component (divided by US\$ 1,500 = 35,000 units).

community-led approach, and would have the advantage of being a turn-key project with the contractors being responsible for all aspects of the construction.

95. In an effort to retain community participation, and to give some form of quality control over construction materials, the contractors were required to hire one member of the family to work on their own house. However, wages offered by the contractors were considered too low by the beneficiaries who preferred to work half a week in the rubber plantations for the same amount of money.

96. In taking this decision the capacity of the local contractors was overestimated, whilst the potential for a community-led approach was underestimated. Opting for the contractor route very much reduced the level of community engagement in the programme, turning them from active participants in delivering their own shelter solutions, to more passive participants who would be consulted from time to time.

97. Furthermore, the option of later adopting a community-led approach became much more difficult as beneficiaries realised the huge amounts of donor money being given for Aceh, and as expectations were raised that houses would be built for them, rather than by them. The evaluators acknowledge that this decision was made with considerable care and reflection and that adopting a community-led approach would itself have posed significant challenges.

98. The decision to go for a two-pronged approach and the insufficient attention given to the transitional shelter phase was linked to the desire to move quickly from emergency shelter to a permanent solution. Reasons given to the evaluators included:

- the desire of the affected population to rebuild their own homes as soon as possible;
- fear that people would be left stranded in poor quality temporary living centres (“barracks”);
- concern that there might be political or military reasons for gathering people in temporary living centres;
- concern that funds used to construct such transitional shelter could better be used to pay for permanent shelter.

99. A key underlying assumption in this decision was that it would be possible to make the jump from emergency to permanent shelter without the need for significant investment in transitional shelter. The evidence reviewed shows that this significant assumption was not justified at the time (see box 3).

100. At the same time in Sri Lanka, a similar debate went on and an early commitment to a transitional shelter approach was made. In reaching the decision there was limited communication between the technical personnel in both locations and this communication was not facilitated through the Bureau. It also points to the limited role of the technical support section in head office in influencing such a key decision.

101. On 1 February 2005, the Indonesian MFA expressed concerns over the “compatibility of UNHCR’s mandate” in the Province of NAD. This marked a crucial

turning point of UNHCR's involvement and operation in Aceh. Despite considerable negotiation by the Regional Office, UNHCR had to close down its operation and withdraw from Aceh by 26 March (declared by the Government as the end of the emergency phase). The Indonesian Government refused to put its request in writing. Geneva HQ questioned its validity as it remained verbal, but finally agreed to the withdrawal on 24 March, two days before the GoI's deadline. As the government had not responded to requests to extend visas for international staff beyond 26 March, there was little alternative but to send the staff out of Indonesia.

Box 3 Emergency to permanent shelter: a step too far?

In the humid, rainy climate of Aceh, the life expectancy of most of the emergency tents was unlikely to be more than a few months. Tents would cope poorly with the flooding which was to be expected in the rainy season. The reconstruction of permanent shelter on such a scale was always likely to take several years. Estimates at the time were in excess of 100,000 units for reconstruction, with a build-back cost estimate of some US\$ 666 million (World Bank June 2005). To put this into context, this amounted to more than ten times the total spend of US\$ 53 million on official construction projects in Aceh (NAD) province in 2004, the year prior to the Tsunami.

102. Considering the political and security issues, the decision to withdraw was relevant and appropriate and the closure procedures in the field were efficiently planned (started on 11 March), managed and coordinated by the Regional Office. Nevertheless, this situation of internal tension highlighted a lack of confidence between Head Quarters and the Regional Office.

103. Two days later, on 28 March 2005, Nias Island was struck by a large earthquake. UNHCR decided to provide immediate emergency assistance by releasing the stocks of tents and relief items remaining from the Tsunami emergency response, which were stored in Medan. There followed three months of extensive negotiations by the RO with the GoI which led to the signature of a MoU with BRR on 10 June 2005 and the return of UNHCR to Aceh two days later.

104. The terms of the MoU stipulated that UNHCR committed itself to supporting the GoI by providing 35,000 housing units in the province of NAD and to participate in reconstruction efforts in Nias Island. The decision to re-engage and maintain the initial targets was firmly requested by Geneva HQ, motivated by the need to use the funds already raised and by concern about risks to donor relations. In considering the decision-making and planning, the following points are raised:

- The evolution of the situation and changing needs between March and June were not properly assessed and taken into consideration.
- The capacity and expertise of UNHCR, and its partners, to run a permanent shelter programme was not reconsidered and remained overestimated.
- The approach of using local contractors was not adequately reviewed.

- Logistics and procurement constraints and challenges were not re-assessed and therefore remained underestimated.
- Fluctuations in funding and costs were underestimated.

105. In Nias, UNHCR decided to support other agencies through the provision of timber and roofing materials, and successfully delivered a substantial proportion of these materials. However, in making this decision, the logistics challenges and UNHCR's logistics capabilities were underestimated, although this was offset by the fact that the shelter agencies had over-estimated the quantities of materials that they would need.

106. The decision to use AMDA (a Japanese-based medical aid organization with little construction experience) as an implementing partner for housing reconstruction was influenced by the fact that UNHCR had received a considerable amount of funding from Japan. It is notable that AMDA decided to adopt a community-based approach – a decision that was based firmly on their principles and on the commitment of their field director.

Sri Lanka

107. In contrast with Indonesia, transitional shelter in Sri Lanka was identified by the government, by UNHCR and by partner agencies, as a key priority to bridge the gap between emergency accommodation and the reconstruction of permanent shelter, estimated to take several years.

108. The GoSL requested UNHCR to support the coordination of the transitional shelter programme at a national level. From the onset of the emergency, UNHCR adopted a clear and straightforward plan with the following key elements:

- A budget limited to no more than US\$ 15 million.
- A geographic focus in the Northern and Eastern districts where it already had a long involvement assisting conflict IDPs. Assistance was provided to two Southern districts only for the first six months.
- A limited time-frame and clear exit strategy. It agreed to coordinate the transitional shelter sector at national level provided the GoSL would take over by the end of 2005.

109. This early decision and clear planning were highly relevant and appropriate to UNHCR's mandate and its target beneficiaries. Consequently, this was well understood and accepted by the GoSL, UN Agencies, NGOs, beneficiaries and donors.

110. However, in examining the development and review of plans (redrafted in February 2005), the following points were noted:

- The technical skills and implementation capacity of UNHCR's partners (NGOs) were overestimated both in the construction and protection fields.

- UNHCR's lack of technical expertise and experience in the shelter sector was underestimated, especially when planning for a key coordination role at national level. When this issue was raised it took some time to be acknowledged and rectified.
- The difficulties in sourcing, and the need for proper management and support of, external technical staff (such as logisticians and construction engineers) were under estimated.

111. Consequently, significant delays occurred in the provision of UNHCR's transitional shelters and following an internal audit in May 2005, a reassessment was made. The reassessment concluded that the need for transitional shelter was less than originally estimated and the provision by other agencies was somewhat more. Therefore it was decided to reduce the initial target of 6,550 to 4,000, a good decision in the circumstances.

112. The UNHCR Sri Lankan team decided to resist the considerable pressure to speed up the provision of shelter, arguing that they should prioritise quality above speed and noting that it wasn't a life-saving operation. This internal debate indicated a healthy and positive willingness to adapt plans but also to resist pressure when necessary.

113. Working with partner agencies and based on its protection mandate, UNHCR decided to address the issue of equity between conflict and Tsunami IDPs. This decision was facilitated because the decision to go for a transitional shelter gave time to address such considerations and because UNHCR's credibility in this area was strong due to its long-term involvement in Sri Lanka working with conflict IDPs. This decision was well-taken and followed through, indicating an ability to think strategically and to use prior experience.

Assessment and monitoring

114. Assessments and monitoring are key requirements for good decision making and planning. However, beyond the first stage of the emergency, assessment and monitoring were weak components in UNHCR's Tsunami response. In this, UNHCR was not alone, as detailed by Bennett et al (2006) in the TEC evaluation study on assessment.

115. In the first stage of the emergency, rapid assessments focused on immediate needs which were relatively straightforward to determine considering the scale of the devastation both in Indonesia and Sri Lanka and the considerable experience that agencies had in other similar emergencies. Therefore, the first UNHCR and joint UN assessments' findings provided a sufficient basis to plan for a relevant and appropriate emergency response.

116. However, in the longer term planning, little importance was given to further quantitative and qualitative in-depth assessments. Similarly, as highlighted in a major internal review, important lessons from previous operations, such as those in Kosovo and East Timor with important similarities to the Tsunami operation, were not factored in.

117. The East Timor evaluation (Dolan et al 2004) contained a number of very pertinent recommendations regarding shelter, human resources, logistics, assessment and emergency operations start-up, some of which are echoed in this report.

118. In general, assessment and monitoring were hampered by inadequate resources and skills which impaired longer term decision-making and planning. This seriously reduced the relevance and efficiency of UNHCR's longer term programmes.

119. Reasons for this included:

- The role of good quality needs assessments as a key decision making tool was not recognised by UNHCR's senior management structures both at HQ and field level. Consequently, very few resources were allocated to assessments.
- The first needs assessment teams did not include a sufficient logistics and IT expertise. In Indonesia, where UNHCR did not have any presence in Aceh prior to the Tsunami, this input would have been of particular importance for both the emergency response and the design of the long term strategies (logistics risks and feasibility).
- The few assessments carried out suffered from a lack of comprehensive and integrated approach, often due to a lack of communication and understanding between the teams, as developed between the community teams and the construction teams in Indonesia.
- Assessments focused on community needs with little attention to community capacities, resources and coping mechanisms.
- A proper monitoring system was not in place as it was not considered a supportive tool for the revision of plans. Instead, in May 2005 Geneva HQ requested a risk assessment by the UNHCR's audit unit of the Sri Lanka operation, perceived in the field as a controlling and repressive measure. The same recommendations and programme readjustments arising from this risk assessment could have been made through an effective monitoring process.
- UNHCR's capacity to learn lessons from previous operations was poor.

Human resource management

120. High quality committed staff are central to the effective delivery of good humanitarian programmes. They need to be deployed in sufficient numbers and be properly managed and supported. UNHCR's Tsunami response benefited from the professionalism, leadership and dedication of a large number of highly motivated and skilled staff. However, the experience also highlighted a number of areas in need of attention.

121. UNHCR rapidly and effectively mobilised a range of international and national staff. Their professionalism, drive and contextual awareness contributed to making the first emergency response effective and efficient. HQ support, through the

deployment of EPRS, ESS, TSS and the Emergency Roster, contributed to the success of the emergency operations.

122. However, the lack of a pre-existing defined structure for an emergency core team in the field led to understaffing and difficulties in effectively fulfilling roles and responsibilities. This was especially the case for Field Managers (Head of Sub-Office, Field-Office or Team Leaders), who had to manage operations and teams, liaise with the RO, work on the strategy, attend coordination meetings and sometimes deal with logistics. Similarly, there was insufficient administrative support with only one Administrative Officer who had to run both programme administrative matters and meet daily staff requirements.

123. There was a significant lack of in-house technical expertise. Where it existed, it was often marginalized or acted only in a weak advisory capacity. Concern was expressed on a number of occasions about the way in which professional expertise is integrated within UNHCR's management structures, both at HQ and field level. In some cases specific technical recommendations were overruled by management, with detrimental effect.

124. The lack of in-house expertise and poor institutional knowledge affected the quality of programming, with programme design often left to consultants without UNHCR experience, with widely varying results. It also affected the manner in which external professionals were recruited and supported – they did not get the level of technical support required.

125. Having taken the lead role in shelter, and with already low in-house capacity, technical expertise was urgently required both in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. For this purpose, external specialist consultants were used, sourced through organizations such as RedR. However, even when highly skilled and with previous experience with UNHCR, they did not have the same level of institutional knowledge as internal staff and did not always share the same organizational view on humanitarian needs, standards and context.

126. Such differences created tensions within the teams, with conflict over adherence to internal procedures and confusion on roles and responsibilities. Insufficient time was planned for and allocated by management for induction, briefing and support for such consultants to ensure coherence and communication among the teams. Consequently, this expertise was not well integrated into the UNHCR management system. In Indonesia, divisions appeared between the management team in Banda Aceh and the technical team in the field and between the technical team and the community engagement team.

127. There were significant deficiencies in expertise for the transition and recovery phases, which require different conceptual tools and management approaches. In particular there were problems in getting a good balance of senior professional expertise in shelter and community engagement. This expertise was not well integrated into the programme management and decision-making processes.

128. The lack of key skills in logistics, supply and IT had a significant impact on programme implementation (both in the emergency and recovery phases). The problems faced by UNHCR in hiring enough experienced logisticians meant that in

many locations, logistics was handled by staff without the necessary experience or skills.

129. In some cases, inexperienced staff members (junior staff and UNVs) were delegated significant responsibilities at the field level, without adequate support, supervision or guidance from the senior teams. Although some of them coped well, the pressure was high and, in some cases, led to mismanagement and serious tensions in the teams.

130. Delays in hiring international staff and staff turn-over impeded programme implementation. UNHCR's hiring procedures and policy were too cumbersome to respond effectively to the human resources needs. In Sri Lanka, although needs were early identified (February 2005), the Senior Shelter Coordinator only got a technical team in May 2005.

131. In some circumstances, efficient staff were removed from their posts either because they were on Temporary Assignment or because their UNV status could not be extended (which meant they had to go through another application procedure at HQ level). In these cases, the lack of flexibility of UNHCR's Human Resources policy resulted in the loss of experienced staff members who had gained a good knowledge of the context and programmes and were willing to stay on in post.

132. In Sri Lanka, a particular challenge was the succession of Country Representatives (four in the first six months). Government and key partner agencies were confronted with several new faces in quick succession. It also meant an inevitable shift in focus with each representative. This was counterbalanced by a strong senior management team who managed to mitigate to a significant extent the negative impact on the programmes.

133. In Indonesia, having chosen to use local contractors, UNHCR experienced considerable difficulty in managing them effectively. This extended from the initial selection and quality control of the contractors, through the imposition of a contractor management system unfamiliar to them, to the problems in UNHCR's internal management structure and the levels of experience of some of the technical consultants in contractor management in such a context.

Logistics

134. Logistics support is a key component of any humanitarian assistance operation, particularly in the emergency phase. In its Tsunami response, it supplied the means for UNHCR to source and distribute NFIs, dispatch the teams to the field and provide construction material for transitional and permanent shelter programmes. However, important weaknesses were observed in UNHCR's logistics, both during the emergency and recovery phases, which seriously affected the programmes' efficiency.

135. There were differences between Sri Lanka and Indonesia in the logistics challenges faced in the emergency phase.

136. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR was already operational, even if it was not working in all Tsunami affected areas. The country's logistics system quickly returned to normal. In this context the logistics system for the humanitarian operation was comparatively

straightforward to set up. In addition to providing for its own logistics, UNHCR hosted and supported a Logistics Operations Centre, which served the UN and NGOs in co-ordinating the supply and distribution of aid.

137. In Indonesia, UNHCR had never worked in Aceh before the Tsunami and the whole logistics capacity had to be built at the onset of the emergency. Access to Aceh by air was very difficult during the first week of emergency due to a restricted number of commercial flights and a massive demand from the humanitarian agencies which were all stuck in Jakarta.

138. Consequently, the first UNHCR teams accessed Banda Aceh by road either with rented vehicles from Medan (some 500km from Banda Aceh) or with UNHCR vehicles from Jakarta (a three-day trip). The Advance Team from RR Jakarta reached Banda Aceh on 2 January and started to set up a basic structure to launch the operation. However, neither a logistician nor an IT person was included in the team as they were not available. This resulted in the focus being on what was needed but not on how it would be delivered.

139. A key turning point of UNHCR's emergency operation in Indonesia was the provision of three helicopters by the Swiss Army. The three Super Pumas arrived in Medan on 11 January 2005 and were operational from 17 January to 27 February 2005. During this 64-day period, they were used efficiently with a total of 480 flights, transporting 370 tonnes of NFIs and 2,270 passengers including displaced Indonesians and non-UNHCR staff. Although late, the provision of the helicopters significantly contributed to the success of the emergency response and compensated for the lack of interaction between UNHCR and UNJLC/UNHAS.

140. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, some key logistics decisions were made by the Senior Management at the HQ Geneva level against the recommendations from the Country/Regional Office.

141. In Indonesia, 450 tonnes of NFIs and telecom equipment were airlifted from Copenhagen, Frankfurt and Dubai via five flights to Jakarta from 2-6 January 2005. This immediate response could have been effective and efficient if Geneva HQ had followed the request from the Indonesian office to postpone the flights for a few days. This was because the Indonesian office had already identified Jakarta as a logistics bottleneck and wanted to set-up Medan (Sumatra) as an alternative delivery point for further domestic transport. Against this request, HQ authorised the flights to Jakarta. When the goods arrived they were stuck in Jakarta for 10 days as the Indonesian Office had no means to transport them to Banda Aceh. During that time, UNHCR was not able to provide relief items to the affected population.

142. In Sri Lanka, during the first phase of the emergency, a private Airlines company offered to UNHCR to airlift tents to Colombo for free. Despite the recommendation of a senior logistician from the field to accept this offer, HQ Geneva decided that only half of the tents would be airlifted and the other half would be sent by ship. The tents sent by ship arrived too late, were not used and were eventually sent back.

143. A similar issue arose over the supply of trucks. The Sri Lanka office determined that 20 trucks were needed, funding was available and they could be sourced locally

and quickly fitted out by local suppliers. However, Geneva HQ intervened and eventually only eight trucks were supplied after a major delay.

144. These examples illustrate the importance of having experienced logisticians in the field, and of having a high level of trust and confidence between HQ and the field and between senior technical staff and senior management.

Information technology and telecommunications

145. Where IT and communications systems are not in place, the rapid deployment of IT specialists and equipment is essential to get the communications network operational as soon as possible in the emergency phase.

146. In Sri Lanka, the Tsunami operation benefited from an IT set-up already in place and the rapid deployment of IT and telecommunication equipment in new areas was relatively effective and efficient.

147. In Indonesia, significant efforts were made both from the HQ and the RO to provide the field teams with basic telecommunication equipment. The HQ sent the first IT batch (VHF/HF/repeaters) on the 30 December 2004, which then departed from Denmark on the 4 January 2005. However, this equipment was part of the shipment that remained stuck in the congested Jakarta entry port. As a consequence, the field teams had to rely on VHF handsets which were brought from West Timor and arrived in Banda Aceh on 2 January 2005.

148. Mobile phones and VHF did not provide a reliable communication network for the field teams, especially in remote areas like Calang in Aceh. This was particularly important as Aceh was a highly insecure area at the initial stage of the operation (Banda Aceh was phase III and the rest of Aceh phase IV). The VHF duplex was not operational before the second week of January (2 weeks after the deployment). The VSATs were operational only for the last three weeks of the operation (i.e. early March).

149. The experience in Indonesia highlighted a number of serious weaknesses in UNHCR's IT and telecommunications rapid response, as follows:

- An early assessment of the IT constraints and challenges by an experienced technician could have resulted in the implementation of a rapid and reliable alternative IT set-up. However an IT technician was not included in the first teams deployed in the field to set up the basic structures.
- Standard Emergency Kits of IT and Telecommunications (with a user friendly system and reasonable volume and weight) would have been preferable to the VSATs which were found inappropriate to a rapid and effective IT deployment: they were complex and required two technicians to be installed.

150. These weaknesses were exacerbated by a weak logistics capacity which delayed the supply of IT and telecommunications equipment.

151. Once the IT and telecommunication system had been set up, UNHCR staff proved its ability to develop and use efficient and safe communications procedures.

Security

152. Security concerns were significantly different in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. When the Tsunami struck, Sri Lanka was in phase I (see Box 4) while in Indonesia, Banda Aceh was in phase III and the rest of Aceh was in phase IV.

153. In Indonesia, the RO decided to redeploy immediately the Field Safety Adviser (FSA) from West Timor to Aceh, who arrived with the first team on 2 January 2005 and was reinforced with the arrival of the former FSA from West Timor on 11 January 2005. Although UNHCR usually relies on the UN Department of Safety and Security (DSS), the decision to bring in its own FSAs contributed significantly to the safe implementation of the programmes.

Box 4 Summary of UN Security Phases

- I: Precautionary: Caution, travel with clearance
- II: Restricted Movement: Staff and families remain at home, No travel unless authorized
- III: Relocation: International staff and families relocated to specified sites or outside the country
- IV: Programme suspension: All international staff not directly concerned with emergency operations or security matters relocated outside the country.
- V: Evacuation: With approval of the UN Secretary-General, all remaining international staff leave (after Office of the United Nations Security Co-ordinator, 1998)

154. Nevertheless, it was found that UNHCR's weak logistics capacity hampered the efforts of the FSAs to ensure a reliable security system in the first phase of the emergency in two key areas:

- Transport: Until the arrival of the Swiss helicopters, UNHCR faced difficulties with transport. Some of the rented vehicles were unsafe and none of them were equipped with radios. Furthermore, despite clear advice given to the staff not to use Government military vehicles, exceptions were sometimes made in remote areas when there was no other option.
- Telecommunications are a critical component of field security and UNHCR staff members were deployed with insufficient and unreliable telecommunication equipment.

155. Overall staff security and safety received a high priority from UNHCR and was managed effectively in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

External relations and interagency coordination

156. UNHCR invested a considerable amount of effort, to good effect, in maintaining and developing relationships with the governments in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR had well established relationships and was viewed positively by the government. The appointment by the President of Mr Tilak Ranaviraja as her Special Commissioner, helped greatly in maintaining relationships. Formal appreciation of the role of UNHCR was made by the President in August 2005.

157. In Indonesia, UNHCR was in a more difficult position. Because of the conflict in Aceh, the government was particularly sensitive about an involvement by outside agencies, particularly one whose mandate was protection. UNHCR handled this very sensitively and succeeded in maintaining good relationships with the government.

158. The role of local government was crucial in managing the practicalities of the response, especially in the longer term. Local government officials were faced with a triple challenge: dealing with the effects of the disaster on themselves, their families and colleagues; responding directly to the huge task of dealing with the disaster; and finally engaging with a bewildering array of external humanitarian actors. Local government was often weak and its role was not properly recognised or supported by the international humanitarian community (e.g. see Bennett et al, 2006).

159. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR took steps to address this issue, including support for training through RedR, and in advocating with partner humanitarian agencies. This was more problematic in Indonesia, particularly because of the need for UNHCR to maintain a low profile. However the close relationship with BRR contributed positively in this regard. Looking to the future, and particularly in its role as a lead agency, UNHCR must ensure that the role of local government is properly recognised and supported.

Interagency coordination

160. It is widely accepted that humanitarian responses will benefit from better or more coordination, allied to leadership and vision. However it is less widely understood what constitutes good coordination, or how much time and effort should be devoted to it. Even though coordination in the Tsunami response was generally felt to be poor, it still took up a large amount of time, with attendance at coordination meetings being particularly onerous for senior staff.

161. In the Tsunami response, the coordination challenges were immense, particularly in the emergency phase in Aceh. A new factor was the fact that funding was not in short supply and the traditional lever of coordination through funding was not available to the government, large donors or the UN agencies. These challenges have been addressed in depth by Bennett et al (2006). They include poor coordination of assessments, poor quality of coordination meetings, a constant stream of visitors (to government agencies etc), the poor capacity of local government and insufficient communication with beneficiaries.

162. In Sri Lanka, UNHCR played an active, firm and positive role in inter-agency coordination in shelter, protection and logistics. This role was understood and

appreciated by partner agencies and was a positive contribution to the humanitarian response.

163. In Indonesia, UNHCR adopted a positive approach to coordination, and managed to provide some effective coordination in shelter in the emergency phase. Despite the commitment by UNHCR, there were major difficulties in implementing a good level of inter-agency co-operation through joint programming. For example, geographical based programming, which was actively promoted by UNHCR, was not adopted by other agencies. UNHCR's withdrawal from, and the conditions of its subsequent return to, Aceh significantly detracted from its ability to play an active role in coordination.

164. The hosting of the joint Logistics Operations Centre in Sri Lanka was a success for inter-agency coordination. However in Indonesia, UNHCR could not get the logistics service it needed through the joint logistics approach and had to rely on its own logistics capacity.

Role of donors

165. In recognition of the major role they play in setting the parameters for effective humanitarian responses, donors have established a set of principles under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative (GHD 2003). In their response to the Tsunami, as has been documented by Telford et al (2006) many donors did not live up to these principles. In particular, funds were not always allocated on the basis of need. Some donors favoured funding for emergency responses, with unreasonably tight deadlines for disbursement, while others wished to support longer term recovery. In its relations with its donors, UNHCR had to contend with many of these sometimes contradictory demands.

166. However, at the Geneva level relationships with donors were generally positive. UNHCR placed much emphasis on communicating with key donors and trying to ensure their wishes were respected. In general, UNHCR held itself much more accountable to its donors than to its beneficiaries: in this respect it is not alone.

167. There was a strong perception from field staff that programmes were unduly influenced by the desire to keep donors happy. This was particularly evident in discussions about the need for speed of delivery and the need to keep to original targets, where the concern (or the perception of concern) of Geneva HQ over donor pressure loomed large. Staff members were generally unaware of the good donorship initiative (Anon 2003) and key principles to which the major donors have signed up. A greater awareness of these principles, which relate closely to core principles of humanitarianism, would help staff give due consideration to donor concerns. In reality it appears that some of the donors were in fact willing to listen to well-founded representations.

Recommendations

168. This section focuses on the main lessons that UNHCR needs to learn from its involvement in the Tsunami response. A very important lesson is that there was much that was very positive in UNHCR's response. It has many great strengths as well as significant areas of weakness. It should acknowledge these successes and seek to understand, appreciate and build on its strengths. It should take care to ensure that actions directed at reducing weaknesses do not reduce its strengths. An example from the Tsunami response was the leadership and commitment shown by numerous UNHCR staff throughout the operation. Any proposed changes, particularly to systems and procedures, should be assessed for their impact on this great strength.

1. Invest in internal shelter capacity and clarify the focus of UNHCR's shelter interventions.

169. UNHCR's internal capacity in shelter expertise was very limited, obliging it to place too much reliance on external consultants. However skilled and committed, external consultants lack the institutional knowledge that can only be achieved through investment in adequate, senior in-house expertise. This is especially important as within the UN system UNHCR has taken on a role as cluster lead for emergency shelter. Moreover, the achievement of adequate shelter is recognised as a core requirement in meeting the protection needs of affected people.

170. In taking this leadership role, UNHCR must have, and be seen to have, the leadership capability to actively shape and deliver best practice. It must have a thorough understanding of shelter issues, from emergency response to durable solutions. This requires in-house senior and influential professional staff with the right blend of skills, experience and credibility. It involves an understanding of how UNHCR can engage with communities in meeting their shelter needs and an understanding of the technical and implementation aspects of the full range of shelter options.

171. It requires a view of shelter as a key human utility, going beyond that of a "one big NFI" logistics challenge. It must be able to take on a strong co-ordinating role and to complement this, where necessary, by the delivery of practical shelter solutions. It should also be prepared where appropriate to step back and take a supportive role to partner agencies better placed to act.

172. This investment in capacity should involve a degree of mainstreaming within the organization comparable to that of Protection. It must go beyond a small group of shelter experts or cluster co-ordinators and become part of the thinking of managers throughout the organization.

173. Recognising that, in an emergency response, there will be a need to rapidly increase its capacity and that of others, UNHCR needs to have in place appropriate mechanisms for recruiting, developing and supporting its "surge capacity" – and that of its key partners. It is particularly important that adequate provision is made to induct and support new staff recruited in emergencies, so that they operate effectively as part of the UNHCR team.

174. Similarly, UNHCR should ensure that adequate planning has been done to provide, from the start of an emergency response, in-field training and support for its key shelter partners, including local government and local NGOs. This involves a policy commitment, the development of capacity and the necessary mechanisms to run field learning support activities. It also requires a commitment to seek adequate funding (e.g. through the Flash Appeal mechanism) for this purpose.

175. Whilst investing in this capacity UNHCR should explore the possibilities for synergies and complementarities with its partners in the shelter cluster and across clusters, especially those in Camp Management and Protection where UNHCR leads. This relates particularly to generic capacity-building mechanisms.

176. Investment must be made in the development and provision of training and related guidance materials, particularly in relation to surge capacity. At the time of an emergency response, resources will be required to support field learning and capacity building. At this stage no significant additional investment is envisaged for stockpiles of shelter materials although it is acknowledged that such an investment may be needed later.

Focus on emergency and transitional shelter

177. UNHCR performed well in emergency and transitional shelter. It has not performed well in the delivery of permanent shelter.

178. UNHCR has established a positive reputation over the years as a provider of emergency shelter and latterly in transitional shelter in Sri Lanka. It should nurture and develop these areas of competence. In the light of the positive experience with its lightweight tent and the poor performance of other designs in this context, it should review and update its stockpile of tents.

179. Despite the challenges faced in permanent shelter in the Tsunami response, and bearing in mind its protection mandate, UNHCR should resist the temptation of retreating into a narrowly defined logistics support role in providing emergency shelter materials.

180. With the experience in the Tsunami as a guide, this means an operational commitment by UNHCR for sufficient time to deliver adequate transitional shelter, likely to be in the order of one year after a disaster, and with a clear exit strategy. Such transitional shelter should be adequate to cover the period, likely to be several years, between the disaster occurring and achieving a durable shelter solution (after Corsellis and Vitale 2005). It would mean that there is time for a good handover to those doing care and maintenance of transitional shelter and those providing permanent shelter. This would help reduce the danger to affected communities of a major gap opening up between emergency and permanent shelter and the danger to UNHCR, should it focus only on emergency shelter, of being left "holding the baby".

181. UNHCR should leave the provision of permanent shelter to others. It has little experience in this area and its experience in Indonesia has not been positive. However, UNHCR needs to ensure it has meaningful relationships with the main agencies likely to be involved in permanent shelter such as UN Habitat, the

International Finance Institutions (IFIs), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and some of the major NGOs.

182. Similarly, UNHCR has a legitimate interest in ensuring that long-term permanent shelter policies are consistent with its own values, and particularly with its protection mandate. Therefore UNHCR should understand, and advocate for, strategies and policies for successful long-term permanent shelter. As the approach chosen in the immediate aftermath of a disaster has profound implications for the longer term, UNHCR needs to ensure that emergency and transitional approaches are designed to support the longer term shelter options.

Be prepared to support responses to natural disasters

183. UNHCR's current policy is not to become involved in natural disasters. However, as has happened in recent major natural disasters (the Tsunami and the South Asia earthquake), it is likely that response capacity will be a key consideration in deciding who should respond.

184. Recognising this, and bearing in mind its relationships with other emergency shelter actors, UNHCR should make it clear that it will be prepared to respond, or provide support to a response, in major natural disasters. For major natural disasters it should be prepared to use its capacities in support of others. Similarly it should be prepared to provide support to internally displaced people as well as refugees. In exceptional circumstances, should it be requested to lead a response, it should be prepared to do so.

185. It is important to clarify this to avoid the need for distracting internal debates at the time of a major sudden-onset disaster. Related to this, UNHCR should ensure that its expertise, policy and support systems address the requirements of responding to a natural disaster and of Internally Displaced People.

2. Commit to a community-led approach.

186. Despite their policy commitments, humanitarian agencies have not performed well in involving affected communities in their own relief and rehabilitation. The synthesis report of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (Telford J & Cosgrave J, 2006) and Bill Clinton's Lesson Learned report (2006) each put this issue at the top of their list. Similarly, UNHCR had limited success in generating community involvement.

187. UNHCR should commit to a genuine community led approach, and take measures to ensure that this commitment is turned into operational reality. This means changing the mindset from that of looking for community participation in UNHCR projects, to one of looking for effective UNHCR participation in community projects. Adopting a community led approach is consistent with the core principles of humanitarian action, is at least as quick and cost-effective as other more top-down, technocratic approaches and has many other benefits.

“The international community needs a fundamental re-orientation from supplying aid to supporting and facilitating communities’ own relief and recovery priorities” (Telford J et al 2005, Tsunami Evaluation Coalition)

“Governments, donors and aid agencies must recognize that families and communities drive their own recovery” (Clinton, W J 2006)

“Involve the refugees and promote self-reliance” (UNCHR, Handbook for Emergencies, undated)

“We will strive to achieve full community participation in our relief and rehabilitation programmes.” (Code of Conduct , 1994)

188. It means paying more attention to the local institutions, both state and civic society, which represent and work with the affected communities. While UNHCR has been good at co-operating with national authorities, it needs to invest more in working with local institutions, which may be marginalized by the international humanitarian “roller-coaster” when they are also overwhelmed by the needs of a major disaster.

189. Adopting such an approach will require leadership, commitment and courage. It will have significant implications on the type of skills needed, the approaches to planning, on donor relations, and on perceptions of accountability to beneficiaries and to donors (see for example Vaux, 2006). In its Tsunami response, UNHCR has demonstrated that there is an appetite to take on such a challenge.

3. Support the “one UN” concept but be realistic.

190. Whilst UNHCR displayed considerable commitment to the “one UN” concept at policy level, it had more difficulty in succeeding in this at an operational level, particularly in Indonesia.

191. Particular challenges occurred in logistics, where UNHCR was not well served by the joint logistics approach. There is a strong feeling, echoing that reported by Sperl et al (2006), that it should retain its own logistics capacity, at least until the inter-agency approach is demonstrably working. UNHCR must ensure that it has the capability to deliver on its core commitments. This should cover a capability to meet its own emergency logistics requirements, particularly for the rapid deployment of emergency shelter materials. This means maintaining sufficient in-house logistics expertise, capable of covering the full range of the logistics chain, from procurement through transport and supply to storage and distribution.

192. UNHCR has an important stake in good inter-agency coordination. It often takes a lead role in co-ordinating humanitarian action and its own effectiveness depends on good coordination with and by others. Working with others, and particularly with OCHA, it should review and develop its own understanding of how to co-ordinate effectively. This includes understanding the difference between top-down and bottom-up coordination, the differences between and achieving the right blend of control, co-operation and even of healthy competition. As well as developing this understanding UNHCR should invest in training to develop the skills needed by relevant staff throughout the organization.

193. As mentioned in the recommendation on shelter capacity, UNHCR should develop its partnerships both within clusters and between clusters, especially in the three clusters where UNHCR is leading.

4. Learn and apply lessons gained from experience.

194. The purpose of this evaluation is to “identify lessons [to be] learned from UNHCR’s operations in Sri Lanka and Indonesia from January 2005 until the present day”. One of the lessons to be learned is that UNHCR has some way to go to ensure it learns lessons from past experience. Over the years UNHCR has invested considerable resources in external evaluations and internal reviews, resulting in a long list of “lessons-to-be-learned”.

195. There is a strong perception, held by long-serving staff and by external stakeholders, that these lessons have not in fact been learned. Such a perception can have a negative effect on morale and stifle the energy and creativity needed to bring about positive change. If the perception accurately reflects the reality, and lessons are not in fact being learned, then resources invested in identifying lessons will be wasted unless there is a comparable investment in learning these lessons.

196. UNHCR needs to address this issue, both as a perception and a reality. It should review the system it has for monitoring and communicating lesson-learning. It should analyse and communicate its performance in learning and applying lessons gained, indicating which lessons it wishes to learn, what actions are required by whom and how they will be held accountable.

197. In its leadership role, UNHCR should support efforts to ensure that such lesson-learning takes within the sector, and particularly within the cluster framework.

5. Enhance UNHCR’s emergency response capacity

198. Whilst UNHCR performed well in its emergency response, there remain significant gaps in its emergency response capacity, from the absence of standard logistics, IT and communications kits through to the lack of a standardised staffing structure and ToR for emergency teams. These gaps hampered its operations in the very early days of the Tsunami operation. This has been highlighted in a number of other evaluations and internal reviews and numerous specific measures have been proposed, but not implemented.

199. UNHCR must have in place appropriate logistics, management and administrative skills and systems to deliver a large-scale emergency response. In this evaluation a number of areas have been highlighted, including:

- The need for a standard emergency field office structure and Terms of Reference
- Logistics and IT systems – the use of standard kits and standardised emergency deployment procedures

200. UNHCR should review its emergency response capacity and the recommendations made in this and previous reviews and evaluations. The issue is not the identification of what needs to be done (which is known within the organization) but, as mentioned in the section on lesson-learning, the follow-up, monitoring and accountability systems to ensure that it actually gets done, and is seen to be done.

Annexes

1. Acronyms

AMDA	Association of Medical Doctors of Asia
BRR	Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi (Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency for Aceh and Nias Island)
DoE	Declaration of Emergency
DSS	Department of Safety and Security
EPRS	Emergency Preparedness and Response Section
ER	Emergency Roster
FSA	Field Safety Advisor
GoI	Government of Indonesia
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UN)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFI	International Finance Institution (e.g. The World Bank)
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAD	Indonesian Province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, generally referred to as Aceh
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NFI	Non-food related relief item
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RedR	Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief
RO	Regional Office
SPHERE	Set of standards for humanitarian response
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSS	Technical Support Section
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Services
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Centre
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
VHF	Very High Frequency (Radio-waves)
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal (for Satellite Internet Access)

2. References

Bennett J, Bertrand W, Harkin C, Samarasinghe S and Wickramatillake, H (2006) *Coordination of humanitarian assistance in Tsunami affected countries*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition

Clinton W J (2006) *Key propositions for building back better: Lessons Learned from the Tsunami recovery* Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery

Code of Conduct (1994) *for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*: <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/index.asp>

Corsellis T and Vitale A (2005) *Transitional Shelter Displaced Populations* Oxfam GB in association with University of Cambridge Shelter Project.

Dolan C, Large J & Naoko O (2004) *Evaluation of UNHCR's repatriation and reintegration programme in East Timor 1999-2003*. Geneva: UNHCR

EM-DAT (2007) *The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database* www.em-dat.net . Brussels: Université Catholique de Louvain

GHD (2003) *Principles and good practice of humanitarian donorship*: Endorsed in Stockholm, 17 June 2003 by Germany, Australia, Belgium, Canada, the European Commission, Denmark, the United States, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, Luxemburg, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland. <http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org>

Office of the United Nations Security Co-ordinator (1998) *Security in the Field* New York: United Nations

Sperl, S, Khassim, D and Snider, D (2006) *Real time evaluation of UNHCR's response to the emergency in Lebanon and Syria, July-September 2006*. Geneva: UNHCR

Telford, J, Cosgrave, J and Houghton, R (2006) *Joint Evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami: Synthesis Report*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

UNHCR (undated) *Handbook for Emergencies* 2nd ed. Geneva : UNHCR

Vaux T (2006) in *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action: Evaluation Utilisation*

De Ville de Goyet C and Morinière L (2006) *The role of needs assessment in the Tsunami Response* London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

World Bank (2005) June *Rebuilding a better Aceh and Nias* <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/wb-idn-25jun.pdf>

3. Pictures of shelter types



Indonesia: Emergency Shelter - Tents



Sri Lanka: Transitional Shelter



Indonesia: Completed UNHCR Permanent House alongside Transitional Shelter under construction



Indonesia: Transitional Shelter – upgraded by owner



Indonesia: Permanent House – German Red Cross

4. Terms of Reference

Evaluation of UNHCR's response to the Tsunami emergency in Indonesia and Sri Lanka

Background

During the days following the earthquake and Tsunami disaster of 26 December 2004, UNHCR mobilized its emergency resources to provide immediate assistance in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Somalia. UNHCR's response to this catastrophe was an exceptional measure. The Office is not traditionally involved in environmental disasters, but given the magnitude of the devastation, the fact that UNHCR was present on the ground and had emergency capacities to respond swiftly, the organization responded to the UN Secretary-General's call for all agencies to assist, and to the request of the UN Country Teams.

The UN Flash Appeal of 6 January 2005 called for US\$977 million to assist some five million affected people over a six-month period. UNHCR's requirements were \$75.8 million for its activities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Somalia. They focused on the delivery of non-food household items, the provision of temporary family shelter and the reconstruction of houses. As the Flash Appeal was issued only 11 days after the earthquake and Tsunami, a revised appeal became necessary as the situation evolved and further assessments were made. A Mid-Term Review was thus issued in April, with revised total requirements of \$1.1 billion and an extended timeframe for implementation to 31 December 2005. UNHCR's budget increased slightly, to \$76.9 million. The Flash Appeal was later extended to June 2006, and some of UNHCR's activities, especially those related to rehabilitation in Indonesia, have continued into 2006.

Indonesia

In the emergency phase, UNHCR assisted 100,000 people in the Indonesian province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (Aceh) through the provision of emergency shelter and other relief items. The Office also worked with the government on the design of an integrated shelter programme. UNHCR left Aceh at the end of March upon completion of the emergency phase. Three days after the withdrawal, however, another earthquake hit Nias and UNHCR assisted a further 45,000 coastal villagers in the province of North Sumatra with non-food and emergency shelter items. UNHCR re-established its presence in Aceh at the end of June, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Indonesia which set the framework for the Office's involvement in the rehabilitation phase.

UNHCR subsequently concentrated on the provision of more permanent shelter as part of an inter-agency, community-based programme for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of affected areas. UNHCR's shelter programme was premised on the concept of permanent housing as the basis for the recovery process. It also took into consideration the interlinked issues of livelihoods and community building,

involving inter-agency partnership on such structures as schools, places of worship and clinics.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, UNHCR concentrated not only on emergency relief assistance and emergency shelter but also on the protection of those affected by the disaster, many of whom had been previously displaced because of the conflict. A particular concern for UNHCR was to ensure that people displaced by the Tsunami, and people displaced by the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, were treated in an equitable manner.

From the early days of the emergency, the Office assisted the government to draw up a list of those displaced, missing, injured or presumed dead, and assisted some 120,000 people to replace or recover lost documentation such as ID cards and birth, marriage and death certificates. Together with the government and other agencies, UNHCR ran more than 50 legal clinics in all affected districts. UNHCR also concentrated on housing, land and property rights, and assumed the lead role for the transitional shelter sector, which provided shelter for about a quarter of a million people in 2005. UNHCR constructed 4,440 housing units and assisted in the upgrading of some 1,000 shelters built by other agencies.

The evaluation

UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) has requested the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) to undertake a review of UNHCR's response to the Tsunami emergency in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. This request fulfils a recommendation made in an External Audit Management Letter, which states that "we recommend UNHCR to conduct an evaluation of its Tsunami operations to gain lessons learned for future operations concerning natural disasters."

The evaluation will be undertaken by one or more independent consultants, managed by PDES and funded by RBAP. The review will be undertaken in accordance with UNHCR's evaluation policy, employing a methodology which takes full account of UNHCR's commitment to age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. The evaluation will draw upon other evaluations of the international response to the Tsunami emergency. UNHCR will facilitate the evaluation by providing the consultants with access to relevant documents, information, personnel and operational locations. The consultants may be accompanied on their mission by a representative of PDES.

The evaluation will identify lessons learned from UNHCR's operations in Sri Lanka and Indonesia from January 2005 until the present day, focusing on the principal themes presented below. In each case, the evaluation will seek to identify lessons learned and to make recommendations that can be used in future emergency operations, especially those that take place in the context of environmental disasters and which involve IDPs. While the evaluation is expected to cover the following issues, the Terms of Reference may be modified with the agreement of the consultants and PDES.

1. Effectiveness, efficiency and impact

This component of the evaluation will assess the impact of UNHCR's operations on the protection and welfare of beneficiary populations. It will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of UNHCR's operations and assess the 'added value' that UNHCR brought to the international community's response to the Tsunami emergency. It will examine the extent to which UNHCR's operations contributed to or undermined local response capacities and the livelihoods strategies of beneficiaries themselves. This component of the evaluation will also examine the operational environment of the Tsunami response, assessing the extent to which external variables affected the outcome and impact of the organization's activities.

2. Decision-making and planning

This component of the evaluation will examine and assess the adequacy of the decision-making procedure that led to UNHCR's initial and continued involvement in the Tsunami emergency response. It will also examine the effectiveness with which UNHCR took key policy decisions, developed and revised strategic plans at each stages of the operation, including the decision to become involved in recovery and rehabilitation activities.

3. Management

This component of the evaluation will examine the management of UNHCR's response to the Tsunami emergency, focusing on the respective role, responsibilities and division of labour between different UNHCR entities at Headquarters and in the field. More specifically, it will ask whether the management structure established for the operation facilitated coherent policymaking, speedy decision-making, as well as effective implementation, monitoring, reporting and information exchange.

4. Implementation

This component of the evaluation will examine a range of different functions involved in the implementation of UNHCR activities in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, including human resource deployment, procurement, logistics, security, telecommunications and information technology. In each case, the evaluation will determine whether the arrangements put in place by UNHCR contributed to or detracted from the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the organization's operational activities.

5. External relations and inter-agency coordination

This component of the evaluation will examine and assess UNHCR's relations with other actors involved in the Tsunami emergency response, including state entities (including the military), other humanitarian agencies (multilateral and non-governmental), civil society organizations and the media. The evaluation will focus particular attention on the adequacy of UNHCR's coordination and cooperation with other UN agencies and IASC members, as well as the effectiveness of the joint

planning approach. It will also examine the implications of the Tsunami emergency response for the implementation of the 'cluster approach' to IDP emergencies.

Report

The report of the evaluation will be no longer than 30 pages (excluding any annexes) and will employ a format to be agreed upon by the consultants and PDES.

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the consultants will prepare a brief (two pages maximum) review of the evaluation process, in order to allow PDES to enhance its evaluation processes and procedures.

jc/pdes
17.11.2006