



SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA & EAST AFRICA: EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS

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Quality and Accountability in Humanitarian Action Highlights of International Federation-supported approaches to on-going challenges in monitoring and evaluation of post-disaster recovery

What do we mean when we talk about quality and accountability? How do these undeniably important, but often vaguely defined, principles influence humanitarian operations such as the tsunami recovery effort?

This fact sheet briefly examines these terms, and then takes a closer look at a few attempts by the International Federation and its members to better identify the quality of its work and improve its accountability to various stakeholders.

Defining quality and accountability

Both these terms are awash in technical definitions. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, **quality** refers to the *merit or worth of an activity or intervention or its compliance with a given standard* (OECD DAC 2002).

Accountability typically refers to the *obligation to act according to clearly defined standards and expectations* (Government of Canada, International Federation) or the *obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in compliance with agreed upon rules and standards* (OECD/DAC 2002).

So, quality and accountability is about performing to or above existing standards (or even creating new standards) and consistently communicating performance to various stakeholders – partners, donors, affected populations and the public.

As noted in a recent Humanitarian Network Paper on accountability, quality and accountability initiatives in humanitarian response generally fall under three categories¹:

- 1) Beneficiary approaches – these focus on the rights and needs of affected populations and emphasize participatory approaches, appropriate contextual analysis and on mechanisms to listen and respond to the expressed needs of those affected by the disaster. The Listening Project, an initiative supported by the International Federation, is one well-known example of this kind of approach.
- 2) Humanitarian principles and standards – these are efforts to develop principles, standards and codes of conduct by which humanitarian actors will agree to hold themselves accountable. The Red Cross Red Crescent Code of Conduct (<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/index.asp>) and Sphere (<http://www.sphereproject.org>) are two popular but under-utilized examples.
- 3) Technical standards – these generally involve standard planning tools (for example logical frameworks or results-based tools) and outcome or impact indicators (for example, Millennium Development indicators) for the various programme areas covered by the relief and development community.

The International Federation

Since the beginning of its tsunami response, the International Federation has endeavored to strengthen and improve its quality and accountability efforts by supporting or driving a number of initiatives.

¹ See A. Davis (2007) - 'Concerning accountability in humanitarian action' HPN Network Paper Number 58, March 2007. ODI, London UK., and Mitchell, J. (2003) 'Accountability, the three-lane highway', Humanitarian Exchange, no 24, July

TRIAMS

The Tsunami Recovery Impact Assessment and Monitoring System (TRIAMS) has been one such initiative to address both the quality and accountability of collective tsunami recovery efforts.

TRIAMS is a common analytical framework designed to assist governments, aid agencies and affected populations to assess and monitor the rate and direction of tsunami recovery. The system aims to match results of the recovery operation (for example, number of houses built in an area) with ongoing needs assessments to ensure that operations are addressing real time needs, rather than outdated assessments. It also endeavors to use information that is disaggregated to the lowest level possible so that it captures the greatest level of detail, allowing for comparisons across villages and sub-districts, including those not directly affected by the disaster.

Conceptualized in 2005 by the International Federation and the World Health Organization (WHO), it also attempts to combine a results-based approach using common indicators (for example, percentage of population with access to water from an improved source) with beneficiary perspectives, and promotes other qualitative methods (such as focus group discussions) to allow for appropriate contextual analysis.

The TRIAMS framework is beginning to address considerable gaps in the analytical approaches of UN and other humanitarian actors in recovery.

Housing needs by Kecamatan, May 2005 (left) & November 2006 (right), Aceh Province

Analysis conducted in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Maldives has demonstrated how existing data can be mapped against current needs assessments to detect significant progress and sometimes, over-commitments as well as large gaps in recovery work.

For example Figure 1 shows how housing needs in Aceh have changed significantly since May 2005.

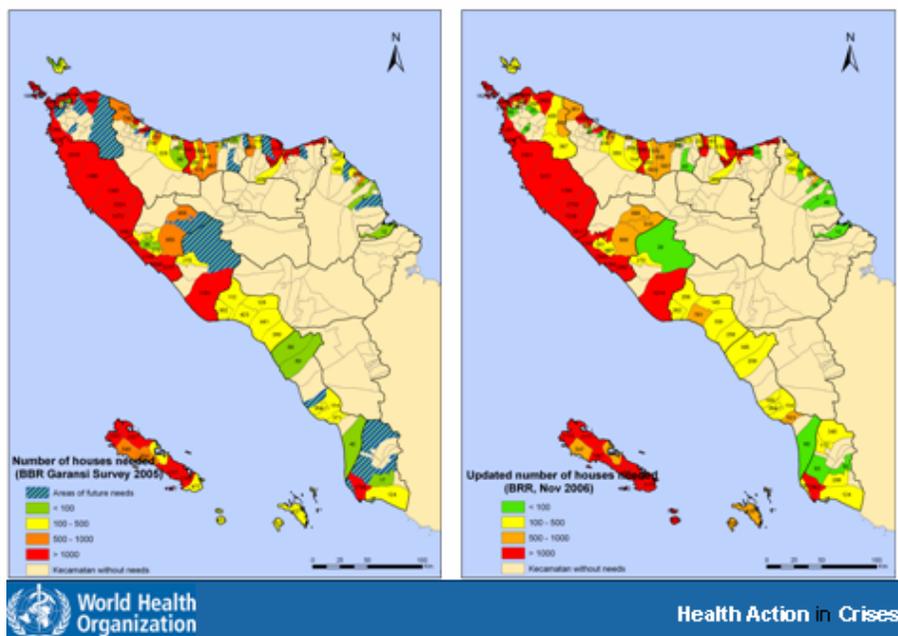


Figure 1: Illustration of changing housing needs over time in Aceh Province, Indonesia

If organizations are basing their response on needs assessments conducted in May 2005 or even earlier, the needs of considerable portions of the population will not be addressed. The value of the TRIAMS approach is therefore clearly evident.

Now in its second full year, more work needs to be done if TRIAMS is to become truly operational and provide decision-makers with useful information to inform on-going recovery efforts. Resources need to be mobilized and affected country governments, particularly at the local district and sub-district level, need to be supported to both analyze and utilize the data that can be produced.

What needs to be done?

- 1) At a minimum, organizations active in the tsunami affected areas of Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Maldives and Thailand should ensure data is disaggregated down to the lowest administrative level possible, turned into useful information and shared widely with various stakeholders to help inform on-going efforts. Too often data is collected but not appropriately analyzed or widely-shared.
- 2) Organizations can adopt TRIAMS indicators, including new risk reduction indicators introduced in 2007.
- 3) Organizations can also support local recovery agencies and relevant ministries in implementing TRIAMS - both the qualitative and quantitative aspects.
- 4) Organizations can provide technical or financial resources to support on-going efforts. Resources are needed by both affected governments to implement TRIAMS and by the co-sponsoring agencies to ensure governments are appropriately supported but also to document lessons learned from this approach in order to develop a recovery monitoring and evaluation (M&E) toolkit for the humanitarian community.

For more information, see <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/pubs/disasters/triams-bangkok-en.pdf>. Check back in mid June for an updated report on TRIAMS highlighting successes and challenges of year one and on participants recommendations to embrace new indicators including disaster risk-reduction.

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition



The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) is an independent learning and accountability initiative that was established in February 2005 in the immediate wake of the tsunami. Its primary aim is to improve the quality of humanitarian action by capturing the lessons from the international response to the tsunami.

TEC is supported by more than 70 agencies and is managed by a ten-member core management group of which the International Federation is a member. In 2006, the TEC produced five thematic evaluations and two synthesis reports, summarizing in detail the successes and challenges of the tsunami response. Four main findings and over 200 sub-recommendations were noted in the initial synthesis report.

TEC members continue to disseminate findings to various actors and more importantly are beginning to benchmark utilization of the recommendations. This work is expected to continue well into 2008 with milestone events planned whereby agencies, international organizations, bilaterals, NGOs and others will note how they have adopted the recommendations of the TEC. Additionally, one further TEC study, led by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) will be carried out later in 2007 on linking relief to recovery to development (LRRD 2) and offers an important opportunity for local actors to articulate progress in these areas.

What needs to be done?

- 1) At a minimum, agencies involved in tsunami recovery need to be aware of the TEC findings and recommendations. The recommendations should also be prioritized and benchmarked – that is, your agency should note how they are addressing the recommendations.
- 2) Agencies should encourage partner organizations to be aware of and address the TEC recommendations.
- 3) Agencies could financially support or help facilitate the sixth TEC study on LRRD.

For more information, go to <http://www.tsunami-evaluation.org/>. To receive boxed sets of the five main TEC studies, including the synthesis report, please email Misqana.Ghebreberhan@ifrc.org.

Federation-wide reporting based on common M&E frameworks – an initial step forward

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation Secretariat and Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies involved in the operation) is publishing twice-yearly Federation-wide progress reports based on common programmatic and financial frameworks. The first of these reports was published to mark the 24 month commemoration of the tsunami, and reflects the operational contributions of more than 30 member National Societies with collective financial resources of CHF 2.85

billion. The reports include both programmatic and financial data, as well as narrative accounts of the successes and challenges of the ongoing operation.

These reports represent the first time that the entire efforts of the International Federation, including its member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, are being systematically captured.

The approach uses common, low-level indicators (mostly outputs, but some outcomes) based on the approaches and interventions held in common by societies supporting operations in India, Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It is also based on the capacities held in common across this diverse group of members.

It should be noted that this is only a first step and more work is needed if the International Federation and its members are going to make progress in truly identifying the difference that we collectively make. In the future it is hoped that these efforts are adopted in other emergency, recovery and post-recovery operations; that such efforts are complemented by joint evaluative efforts and most importantly, that in the future, such frameworks are derived from common planning approaches.

What needs to be done?

- 1) At a minimum, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies supporting operations in the tsunami affected countries of India, Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand need to ensure they are aware of and participating in the new Federation-wide reporting system.
- 2) National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies funding external partners in these countries (i.e. UN, international or local NGOs etc.) need to ensure they are capturing data on their results as well, according to the Federation-wide indicators.

To view the two year Federation-wide progress report, go to: www.ifrc.org/tsunami. For more information on new Federation-wide reporting framework, email Lesley.Schaffer@ifrc.org for information on financial guidelines and Margaret.Stansberry@ifrc.org for information on programmatic guidelines.

Building Performance Accountability Frameworks

A performance accountability framework (PAF) is a framework or system articulating how performance in implementing strategies, programmes or projects will be measured and communicated; it also articulates the standards to which the agency will hold themselves accountable (e.g. Code of Conduct, Red Cross Red Crescent Principles, Sphere etc).

Although by no means a new tool, many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies active in the tsunami-affected countries have updated or develop new performance accountability frameworks that reflect the depth and complexity of their tsunami recovery efforts. Key or common elements are summarized in the box to the right.

Australian Red Cross, supported by the International Federation, recently brought together over 40 key staff supporting operations in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives to develop their own PAF.

Key elements of a PAF:

- *Performance indicators*: both programmatic and financial, includes:
 - Process, output and outcome/impact level, that are collected via various monitoring and evaluation systems and *utilized* for onward planning
- *Qualitative approaches*: to help interpret performance indicators
- *Beneficiary perspectives*: (measured via both quantitative and qualitative methods) to monitor and assess beneficiary satisfaction and self reported needs among other things
- *Active learning mechanisms* – other measures to help ensure lessons are being learned and applied, including but not limited to evaluations, peer-reviews, staff training plans, communications strategies etc.
- *Reporting vehicles* – for key components of framework at set intervals
- *Planning mechanisms* – by which data can be fed into and activities and plans modified based on 'evidence'.

Key components included operationalizing standards important to governance, as well as identifying those of concern to field teams. Teams also worked hard to develop key performance indicators and begin to develop evaluation strategies to enable objective examinations of important issues such as equity and sustainability. Similar efforts were also recently undertaken by the American Red Cross Tsunami Recovery Programme.

What needs to be done?

- 1) At a minimum, National Societies should reflect on how they are measuring their own accountability to self-expressed or endorsed standards and principles (including Red Cross Code of Conduct, among others).
- 2) National Societies can work to ensure that they have a reasonable performance accountability framework supporting their activities, and
- 3) National Societies should be aware of and contribute to the emerging global performance accountability framework under development by the International Federation for the Global Agenda.

Summary

Significant efforts are underway both within the International Federation and the wider humanitarian sector to strengthen quality and accountability practices in the wake of the tsunami. However, these efforts must continue if they are to become a normal activity within disaster response and recovery efforts. Actors must ensure that their plans are based on solid evidence, and that they are able to track, record and communicate the results of their efforts as well as on-going needs. In doing so, the International Federation and the wider humanitarian community will truly be able to demonstrate the difference it makes.

For more details and news stories, photos and all operational updates related to the tsunami visit:
<http://www.ifrc.org/tsunami>