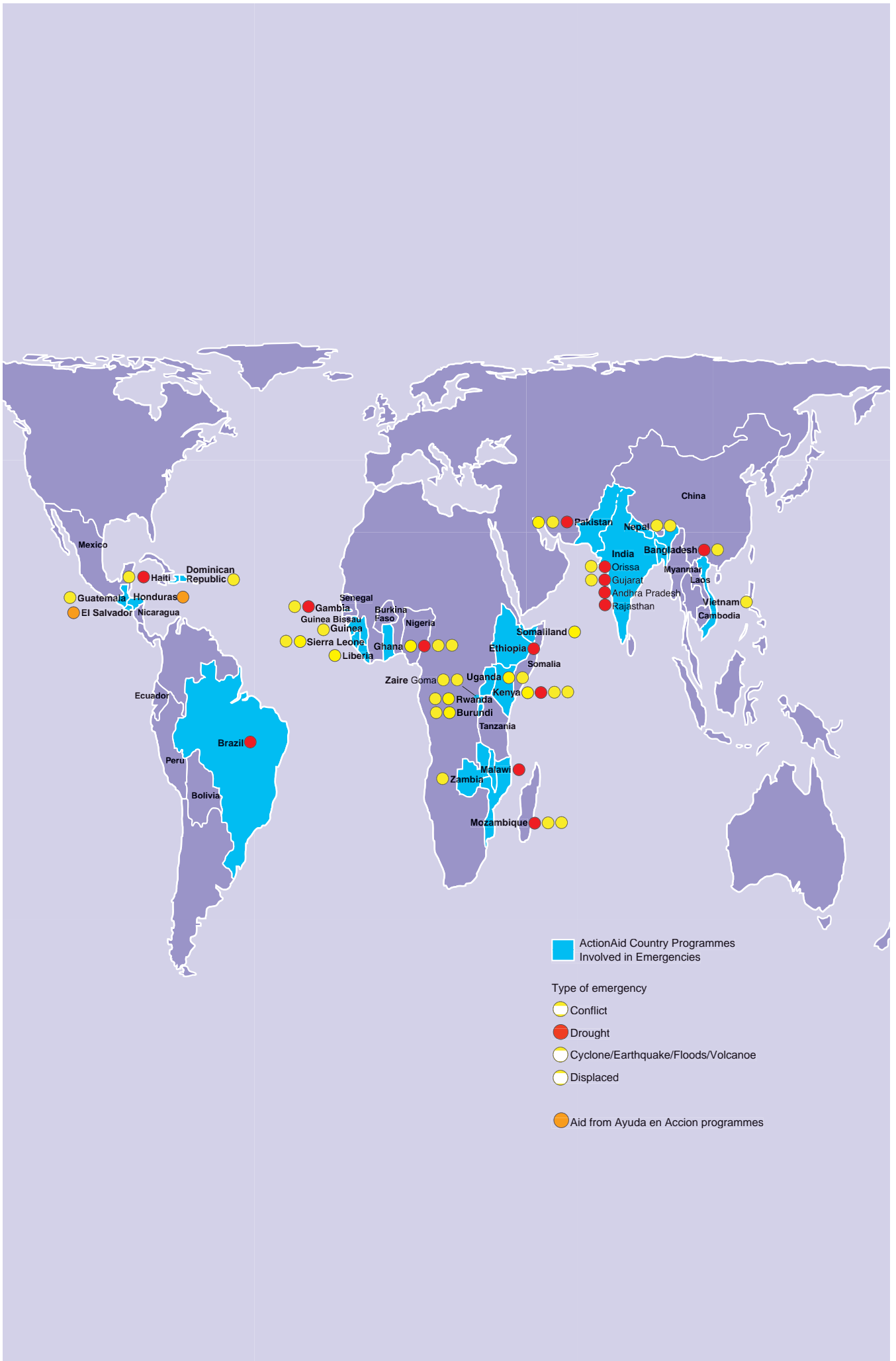




Emergencies Impact **Review**

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**Emergencies Unit, March 2002**

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# Introduction



Bangladesh, 1999

## ActionAid's Approach to Emergencies

**ActionAid acknowledges the need to match our work with the reality of emergencies as experienced by poor people. So we adopt a long-term perspective in our analysis and practice. Our approach covers preparedness, response and recovery.**

**ActionAid's analysis draws our attention to the systematic violation of rights. A rights-based analysis helps us address those causes of inequality and discrimination that exacerbate poor people's vulnerability.**

**We promote the active agency of people affected by emergencies. Through our work we address peoples' concerns for their livelihoods as well as their immediate needs.**

ActionAid has recognised for some time that poor people are more vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters and conflicts. As an organisation working towards the eradication of poverty, we have to work with poor people to address the consequences of these emergencies. We have been supporting emergency work with an increasingly distinct long-term approach. This was articulated in the Emergency Strategy approved by the Directors in May 2000, in which existing approaches became consistent with the rights-based approach of the 1999-2003 ActionAid strategy, *Fighting poverty together*.

We stress the importance of strengthening poor peoples' capacities to cope with the impact of emergencies. We seek to increase the capacities of those who are responsible for emergency preparedness and response.

ActionAid takes opportunities presented by emergencies to advance our overall goal of poverty elimination.

ActionAid has decentralised management which ensures that decisions are made as close as possible to where their consequences are felt. Central to the spirit of *Fighting poverty together* is our accountability to the poor and marginalised women, men, boys and girls with whom we work. ActionAid's accountability systems encourages this by promoting greater participation and transparency in all our work and empathy with the poor and marginalised groups with whom we work. A key tool is the use of review and reflection processes, which give us the chance to learn locally from our experience and how others perceive our work. Within the organisation, we have international networks of staff involved in specific aspects of work. The networks serve as a mechanism to share this learning internationally among peers, without depending on line management structures.

This study is the product of work from the ActionAid Emergencies Network and Impact Assessment Network. *Ayuda en Acción* (the Spanish sister organisation within the ActionAid Alliance) contributed a study of their experience in Latin America. The purpose is to share lessons and insights from our emergency work and so understand whether a long-term approach to emergencies (as recommended in our strategy) is effective.

## The study brought together three streams of work:

- Five core studies were carried out by country programmes to review all their emergencies work as part of their own country reviews (Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Bangladesh and Uganda).
- Nine case studies were undertaken by different countries to reflect on specific aspects of their emergency work (Burundi, Dominican republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Malawi, Somaliland)
- A consultant prepared a desk study of existing evaluations and reviews from the last five years. The consultant also visited some of the countries and wrote the final report.

Each of the separate studies was prepared independently to meet the priorities of the countries concerned, but all related to a common research framework.

This study shows that a long-term approach has a positive impact. It includes a wealth of insights and examples of how and why this is the case. It also highlights some of the challenges for programme managers to further improve their work.

In the initial planning meeting (Kenya, April 2001) for this process the members of the emergencies and impact assessment networks were very clear that the process of learning does not end with the production of a report. I hope that ActionAid staff and others will use this as a tool for better programming in the future.

**Roger Yates**  
**Head of Emergencies Unit**  
 March 2002

# Summary of Findings

**“We are so happy to have our own cards and know we will get our own food. The chiefs will now grow thin!”**

Women in Manhica, Mozambique

This study has drawn on documentation illustrating a broad range of experience in emergency-related work. The individual country studies show that ActionAid programmes are responding to a variety of emergencies, many complex and difficult, in different cultural and political settings. This presents a great opportunity to learn, and to understand the contribution of humanitarian work to ActionAid's strategy of *Fighting poverty together*.

The country studies indicate that a long-term approach – responding to emergencies using ‘developmental’ principles – works well, especially where the agency is already established and active but also outside existing project areas. What can be seen from the reviews is that in many cases people have been left better equipped to deal with future emergencies, and in some cases better off than before. This is not always achievable with a traditional approach to relief.

**Several ActionAid programmes have developed ‘niches’ of expertise, such as:**

**India**

- psycho-social
- social audit

**Burundi**

- peace-building

**Malawi**

- seed distribution

**Bangladesh**

- interest free loans, support to local loan-giving CBOs

**Ethiopia, India, Kenya**

- cash-for-work and food-for-work programmes

**Sierra Leone**

- working with ex-combatants on peace building initiatives

It is clear from the country studies that positive impact is made not only by choosing the right things to do, but also involves a commitment to ActionAid's core principles of working with the most marginalised groups in an open and transparent way. For instance, fairness and transparency are often rare qualities in many emergencies. ActionAid's activities were sometimes the first time people received assistance, which was not unfairly distributed or siphoned off by the powerful. Such experiences reinforce in a very practical way the affected people's awareness of their right to food, and hopefully can help to change government, non governmental organisation and donor attitudes to emergency aid as a right, not as charity.

The participation of those affected by the emergency is a crucial factor in increasing positive impact. Communities appreciate when they have the opportunity to participate, and some of the poorest people develop more power through this process.

We can only verify such long-term impact by monitoring over time.

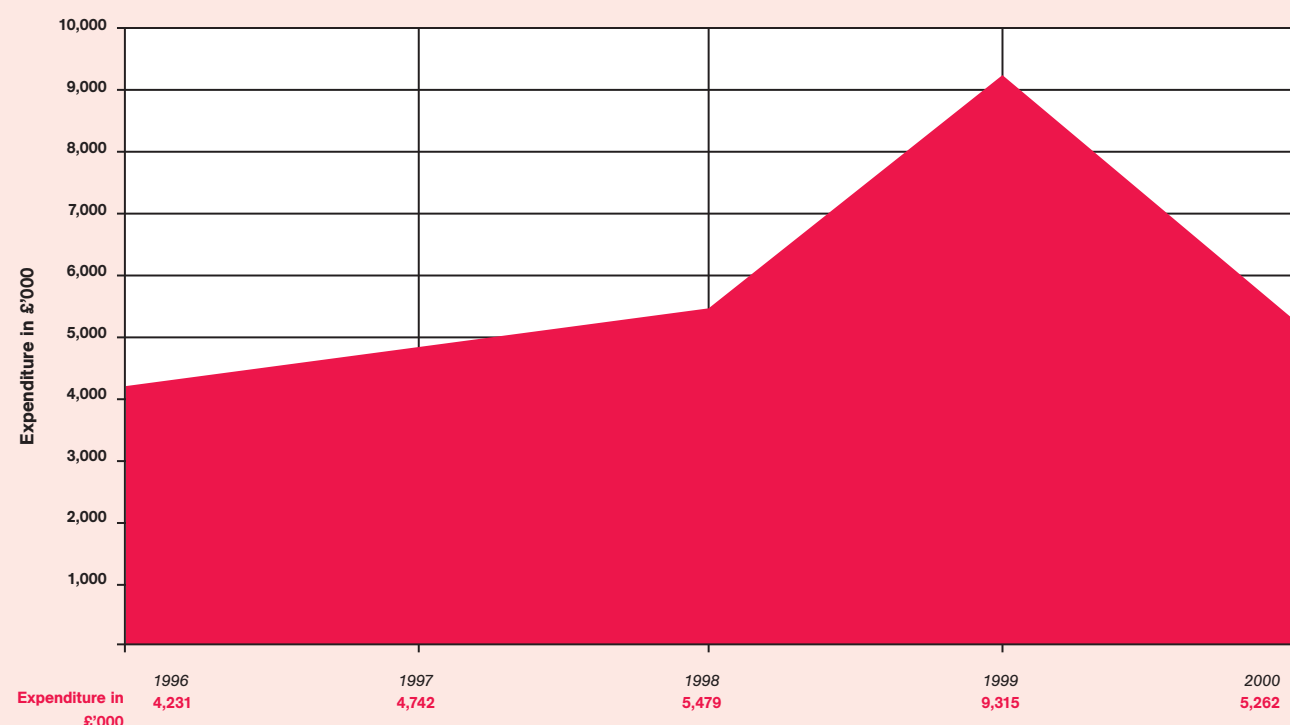
However, there are still mixed attitudes to AA's role in emergencies and poor awareness of the integral role of emergency work in *Fighting poverty together*. Emergencies work is still sometimes seen as something separate or something to be avoided in case it impacts negatively on long-term programme activities. Principles governing development programme work are often dispensed with during emergencies without sufficient analysis. This sometimes results in a tokenistic response, a top-down approach and/or missed opportunities.

Overall, ActionAid's long-term approach reminds us that emergencies also present opportunities to further developmental goals. Social disruption may pave the way for marginalised people to gain more control over their lives. Post-emergency recovery processes can leave people better off than before the emergency ('recovery plus'). Community-based preparedness and early warning mechanisms can lessen the impact of emergencies on livelihoods and development. With these insights, NGOs can strategically plan to support these processes as part of the fight against poverty.

# 1 ActionAid's involvement in Emergencies work

# 2 ActionAid's Approach to Emergencies

**Emergencies Expenditure**



ActionAid works in 25 countries through partner agencies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. ActionAid has engaged increasingly in emergency-related work since 1992 when such work became an acknowledged part of its mandate and the UK emergencies unit was established. Even before that, country programmes such as Bangladesh and Mozambique were engaged in emergency response. Since 1992, there is evidence of an increase in both the number of responses and the degree to which ActionAid will support emergency interventions. *Ayuda en*

*Acción* works in five countries in Latin America and supports ActionAid's work in other countries.

### Responding to large scale emergencies

In the last four years Bangladesh, Guatemala, India and Mozambique programmes have undertaken emergency responses funded through the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), of which ActionAid is a member. All of these responses were to rapid-onset disasters, and none were linked to conflict situations.

### Expenditure on emergency work

The table above shows that ActionAid's recorded spend on emergencies has risen since 1996. These figures are those submitted to the Disasters Emergencies Committee. They do not include spending on preparedness and where emergencies and development are fully integrated.

1 Emergencies Review 1999

ActionAid recognise that emergencies such as drought, floods, conflict etc are additional threats within the daily struggle of poor people to survive and improve the quality of their lives. In emergencies, poor people's main concerns are survival and their immediate needs (food, water, shelter etc). But they are also concerned about their own ability to:

- ensure their assets are not lost (or are replaced)
- earn a living now and in the future
- get involved in those decisions which affect them
- get a fair share of those resources to which they are entitled (e.g. relief packages, compensation)
- cope with future emergencies.

### 1 Focus on livelihoods

The 'long term' approach to emergencies aims to dispel the historical view of relief and development as diametrically opposed processes. This grew out of an analysis, which, puts saving livelihoods as well as lives as the primary aim of emergency interventions. When livelihoods are the primary focus, people affected by the emergency are placed at the centre of any intervention (unlike the classic emphasis on external relief responses).

### 2 A long term perspective

There is no common definition for the term "emergencies" in ActionAid, but

there is a consistent underlying understanding in ActionAid that emergencies need to be analysed with long-term considerations<sup>7</sup>. Adoption of this approach does not necessarily imply a long-term presence on behalf of the agency, or even a long-term intervention, but an analysis of the emergency in its socio-political, cultural and environmental context rather than as a one-off event.

Such analysis helps us to understand:

- a the causes and patterns of vulnerability
- b the close relationship between poverty, vulnerability and the denial of rights
- c those factors which undermine peoples capacity to cope.

Therefore, ActionAid's approach promotes long-term and sustainable solutions through the integration of emergency and ongoing development work. Under this banner, development and emergencies work becomes mutually supportive as integrated "community support".

### 3 Rights-based analysis

ActionAid's analysis draws our attention to the systematic violation of rights, which underlie poverty, conflict and disasters such as famine. A rights-based analysis helps us to address those causes of inequality and discrimination that exacerbate

poor peoples' vulnerability. We also focus on the accompanying responsibilities at different levels: local, national and international.

### 4 Participation and differentiation

A key component of ActionAid's approach is participation. Based on our recognition of poor peoples' needs, rights and capacities, our programmes build on local resources and expertise. We promote the active involvement of people affected by emergencies, particularly the most marginalised groups of men, women and children. A rights-based focus and a thorough understanding of the socio-political and cultural context helps to ensure that people from differently affected groups are enabled to contribute actively in planning as well as implementation - and have their different needs addressed.

### 5 Strengthening peoples' capabilities

ActionAid's approach stresses the importance of strengthening poor peoples' own ability to cope with the impact of emergencies. At the same time, our approach seeks to increase the capacities of those, such as governments, who are responsible for emergency preparedness and response.

see table overleaf

ActionAid's approach to emergencies includes preparedness, response, recovery and advocacy.

	Preparedness	Response	Recovery	Advocacy
<b>Conflict</b>	Burundi	Sierra Leone Burundi Ghana Uganda Kenya	Ghana Somaliland Liberia Uganda Rwanda	Sierra Leone Burundi Ghana
<b>Drought</b>	Kenya Ghana Gambia Ethiopia Pakistan India-Orissa India-Gujarat India-Andra Pradesh Brazil Bangladesh Mozambique	Haiti Ghana Kenya Malawi India-Rajasthan Ethiopia	Kenya Malawi Ethiopia Brazil	Kenya Ghana (local)
<b>Cyclone Earthquake Floods</b>	Bangladesh Mozambique Nepal	Ghana Bangladesh Gambia Mozambique India-Orissa Kenya India-Gujarat earthquake Guatemala Pakistan Haiti/Dominican Republic	Bangladesh Mozambique India-Orissa Vietnam India Gujarat earthquake	Bangladesh (local) India-Orissa Ghana (local) India-Gujarat earthquake
<b>Displaced</b>		Zaire/Rwanda Burundi Uganda Mozambique Kenya Guinea/Sierra Leone Ghana Nepal Pakistan	Mozambique Pakistan	Nepal

The following sections cover some of the most important findings emphasised by the country studies. They highlight some of the approaches that have resulted in positive impact and lessons that have arisen.

### Preparedness and prevention

Preparedness (to increase the resilience of people and to improve the quality of response) and prevention activities can be implemented before, during and after emergencies. Several country programmes have engaged in preparedness and early warning for crop failures caused by drought. In Ethiopia and Ghana, emergencies have been predicted through community based monitoring systems. In Ghana, grain banks set up initially to respond to food shortages have made people less vulnerable to food stress, and represent a ready system for community-based aid delivery should the need arise.

### The hungry period ... a thing of the past – Grain Banks in Ghana

**Background:** The Bawku West District in Ghana is characterised by erratic rainfall, poor/degraded soils, high rural poverty and a proliferation of pests and diseases. These have resulted in perennial food deficits for about 4 – 5 months in the year, when most families are unable to afford two meals in a day. At times, this has resulted in grave food shortages, with disastrous consequences including starvation and death.

ActionAid Ghana engaged the communities in discussions on appropriate responses to this emergency. Communities decided on establishing Grain Banks as a long-term intervention. The programme started with four banks and later increased to eleven. The project has two components; free grain to the hard core poor (“Tarim”) and grain for sale to the better off.

The banks are managed by elected representatives of the communities known as the Grain Bank Management Committees (GBMCs). Their responsibilities include, purchase of grain, keeping of the relevant records, sale of grain, grain treatment and advise the community on the proper management of the bank. This is done in close consultation with the communities at meetings. AAGhana only plays a monitoring role to ensure that records are well kept and support them with training on gaps identified to enhance their effectiveness.

**Sustainability:** Over the years, the communities in the Bawku West District have worked tirelessly to ensure that the banks are self-reliant. Farmers are encouraged to sell their grains to the banks instead of to middlemen at harvest time when prices are lowest. The grains are then stored until the lean season when farmers have the option to either take their grains to the market to sell or allow the grain bank to sell it on their behalf. In the case of the former, 20% of the profit is given to the bank to cover storage cost, which includes treatment charges, travel expenses and lunch allowance to the grain bank management committees whenever they travel or work for the community. In the case of the latter, the bank takes 10% of the profit because the price at which the bank would sell the grain would be slightly below the market price.

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

The District Assembly, as, part of their emergency preparedness strategy towards food shortages is now co-operating with the banks to provide them with funds from the government's Emergency Social Relief Programme to stock the banks against the lean season. This grain sale is treated purely as a commercial venture with some reasonable margin of profit to make up for the shortfalls in the Tarim's component. The banks keep this money and treat it as revolving fund for the coming years.

**Impact: The banks have made positive impact on the lives of the community. These include:**

- Increases community confidence at meeting community needs during lean periods.
- Reduces the distances walked by community members especially women to purchase grains.
- Increased market opportunities for local farmers to sell their grain (while at the same time guaranteeing them food at lower prices during the lean period) therefore significantly increasing household incomes.
- Provides timely access to grain all year round
- Contributes significantly in empowering the communities to take control of the management of their own development process through the development and the strengthening of local expertise in community management of projects ie Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS) by collecting the information, analyzing and acting accordingly and informing ActionAid-Ghana.
- Strengthens local partnerships between the communities and other development partners such Care International, Technoserve, the District Assemblies and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in the Upper East Region who have indicated their interest to replicate the idea in other parts of the region and the country at large.

The Grain banks have also led to the elimination of exploitative traders. These middle men/women would buy grains at very low prices during harvest time and deliberately create artificial shortages in order to sell at cut-throat prices. The control of food resources is now in the hands of the community members. This has always been evident during interactions and planning sessions where grain banks have always been ranked among the top three positive interventions in all the communities.

**“The banks have helped me and my family a lot. I remember some years ago when I had to toil all day during the hungry season just to get some food for my family who otherwise would have to go without food. In those days a lot of our young men and women left the village during the hungry period to seek greener pastures in the big cities. Married couples were not left out in this as a lot of them went and did not return to their spouses again, thus causing a lot of marriages to break. But today things are different. The grain banks have made it possible for me and everybody in this village to have access to grains at any time of the year and very cheap too. As I am talking there is a lot of millet stocked in the bank so my wife doesn't need to travel any long distance to buy it. There is always enough to eat and you can see the children looking happy and healthy and playing. If the community experiences good weather conditions in the coming years, then I would confidently say that food shortages would be a problem of the past. ActionAid has done its best and I say thank you.”**

**Awingud Akugre**  
a community member from Agbodzua

**2** Small silt islands in the river delta, which are vulnerable to cyclones and tidal surges.

Many ActionAid programmes dealing with disease prevention in rapid onset emergencies have aimed at mitigating immediate risks during an emergency. This also leaves people more prepared for the future.

**Incorporating disaster management into children's education**

As part of its Chars Development Programme in the coastal region of southern Bangladesh, ActionAid ran a one-year pilot programme to improve the

level of disaster preparedness on the offshore chars<sup>2</sup>. One aspect of their approach has been to incorporate disaster management into the school curriculum. Children in the school receive basic information of disaster preparedness during their regular class schedule, through using local Jari song and other folk media in disseminating the information. Now AA Bangladesh is using this learning as part of a broader advocacy campaign on relevant education.



Children being taught how they can protect themselves during a cyclone, Bangladesh

**Haemorrhagic Fever – The Ebola Crisis in Uganda (Dec 2000)**

Towards the end of the year 2000, Uganda was hit by the Ebola (haemorrhagic) fever. One of the worst hit districts was Masindi. ActionAid collaborated actively with the Government in Masindi and was part of the district anti-Ebola taskforce that worked tirelessly to control and eradicate the disease from the affected communities.

**The response by ActionAid as part of the taskforce**

- Sensitisation of the community on the dangers of the disease, its transmission and control and preventive measures;
- Provision of logistical support in terms of transport (hired a mini-bus) and fuel to facilitate the taskforce as it went about the sensitisation programme and identifying cases that required medical attention and transfers to the hospital.

**Impact**

- Awareness raised and people changed their traditional attitudes like bathing the dead, having realised how deadly the disease was;
- People took more precaution and became more active in reporting any suspicious cases. People are more alert to epidemics.
- Ebola was eventually brought under control, and eventually eradicated. Because of the vigilance of the taskforce, several people whose lives were at risk were saved.

In all these cases, different means, such as education, infrastructure and institutional skills building have strengthened people's resilience to future emergencies. This represents good practice and conforms with the Red Cross Code of Conduct, which states that "Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerability to disaster as well as meeting basic needs".

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

However, many of ActionAid's emergency interventions originate from a need to respond to an emergency – not from recognition of the need for preparedness before the emergency happens. This is surprising, given ActionAid's development programmes are potentially prime settings for such vision and action.

**“What remained very clear was that little or no prevention and preparedness initiatives – which are essentially developmental activities, have pro-actively been factored into both the developmental and emergency activities of ActionAid Kenya in Merti and Sericho.”**

**ActionAid Kenya, Emergencies Review 2001**

### Improving our response in emergencies

The other side of preparedness, however, is ensuring that ActionAid programmes are better prepared to respond. Some country programmes have undertaken risk analysis and contingency planning exercises, although there is no coherent plan to ensure all programmes do so. Where plans have been made, they are not always used to assist programme planning. In some countries contingency planning has been a participatory process including local partners; in others it has been confined

to senior management and not always communicated to other staff.

Such planning if used well could greatly strengthen strategic analysis, speed up decisions on whether and how to respond to a crisis, and make a response more timely and appropriate. It can also inform long-term programme options to strengthen livelihoods and resilience, and highlight gaps in capacity and resources, and collaboration opportunities with partners and government. Most importantly, it can increase confidence to deal with emergencies, at both country programme and project level. Since the long-term approach is based on good contextual analysis, pre-emergency planning is a useful tool, and one, which can make assessment and response design much easier.

### Recovery and 'Recovery Plus'

ActionAid's most obvious strength is in post-emergency recovery work, which is the focus for most of its emergency responses. Recovery work usually aims to reduce the poverty caused by emergencies, through protecting or rebuilding livelihoods and minimising asset loss.

The impact of many ActionAid programmes has indeed gone beyond the usual concept of recovery (where people re-attain their previous level of livelihood and well being) towards 'recovery plus',<sup>3</sup> whereby people are in some way better off than before the

**“Since the attack ActionAid Sierra Leone has educated us on how to help each other ... We have communal work gangs on different days of the week ... Our area of seed rice planted has increased from 1 to 3 hectares ... The community farm is for a seed bank.”**

Farmers, Sella Limba, Sierra Leone

**“I prefer living here because the floods cannot reach us. The school is better for me.”**

Jose Agostinho, Buna, Mozambique

**“My house was made of traditional materials; the one I have now is much better, I have always wanted a house like this.”**

Alice Francisco Ndove, Nguene, Mozambique

**“Thanks to Cyclone Georges I now have a bed, and the children sleep in a separate room”.**

Female Haitian immigrant, Dominican Republic

**“The area is cleaner than before the cholera epidemic ... There is improved sanitation in our homes ... Our zone still performs regular Saturday clean-ups and the LCI<sup>4</sup> chairman drums for residents to respond to the community work.”**

Bwaise community member, Uganda

emergency. This concept recognises the potential of emergencies to redefine social relations and produce opportunities for marginalised people to improve their situation.



Bwaise residents put rubbish into sacks for collection by city council tractor, Uganda

This may result in better livelihoods, living conditions, or access to services, which may also make individuals and communities more resilient to future emergencies. Ideally, this is done in a way which improves local skills: for instance, in Uganda ActionAid responded to a cholera outbreak in the

urban slums by training and supporting local community groups to promote hygiene and sanitation.

The concept of 'recovery plus' links with the idea that in the context of an emergency response there are opportunities for supporting long-term development. As such, 'recovery plus' is an appropriate emergency niche for ActionAid to develop.

### Relief that helps recovery

While the focus on recovery work fits well with ActionAid's anti-poverty strategy, this does not imply that relief work is less important.

**“I was in a bad state [during the floods] and didn't know what to do. The food aid helped to cover some days of hunger at a difficult time.”**

Jose Artur, Sironge, Mozambique

The Gujarat experience highlights the importance of concrete activities as an entry point to rights-based work in emergencies.

“When community members are asked to rate the importance of Sneh Samuday<sup>5</sup> activities, unsurprisingly almost all point towards the hard inputs of cash for work, temporary shelter and stipends - with some asking Sneh Samuday to help with rebuilding permanent housing (because they trust that Sneh Samuday will deliver). One can speculate that if people had received compensation the day after receiving assistance completing forms this would also be rated highly. But this does highlight the importance people place on tangible results and suggests that NGO efforts aimed solely at long-term processes (e.g. improving Government accountability, empowerment) will fail ... as communities become sceptical when ambitions take so long to be realised. There has been little tradition or experience of social struggle within Katchh and the aim of creating vibrant rights-aware community will take time whether working to realise rights at household, community or state level.”

ActionAid India Emergencies Review 2001

**Examples of 'recovery plus' benefits, which are directly attributable to emergency responses, are:**

**Orissa, India: Roads and embankments resulting from post-cyclone food-for-work programmes in Orissa.**

**Dominican Republic: Better housing and new health posts for Haitian immigrants as part of slum rebuilding after Hurricane Georges in Dominican Republic.**

**Honduras: A new bridge improving communications and trading opportunities for isolated communities in Honduras (post Hurricane Mitch).**

**Kenya: New and reconstructed boreholes to protect pastoralists' livelihoods in drought (Merti) and flood protection dykes (Busia).**

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

## The benefits of employment programmes

Some emergency programmes – notably food-for-work and cash-for-work in Ethiopia, Honduras and India – have achieved multiple impacts from the same activity. People have earned money or food to support household incomes, sometimes diminishing the need for migration at a time when the local economy is constricted. The work done has brought improvements that also support development goals. These have included building infrastructure such as roads and bridges, houses and communal shelters, as well as environmental rehabilitation varying from rubble clearance after the earthquake in Gujarat to soil conservation in Ethiopia.

In Honduras, people were encouraged to take part in bridge construction after Hurricane Mitch so they could feel ownership of the project and provide necessary labour. It was not planned as a cash-for-work intervention. The

review found that people's main motivation for participating was money. Yet, improved communications had a positive impact for livelihoods and well being, improving access to markets and services for both men (who mainly appreciated the economic impact) and women (primarily social and health reasons). There were also unexpected benefits to people who took the opportunity to sell refreshments to the construction workers.

Employment programmes have formed a useful link between relief and recovery, and have allowed people a breathing space in which to reorganise their lives after a disaster. Employment programmes can also boost community morale when producing tangible benefits prioritised by the community. When the community owns the whole process of planning and deciding priorities, the impact of these programmes is increased. The choice between food-for-work and cash-for-



Members of the 'Westside Boys' football team made up of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone following a match against the British Army Peacekeeping forces.

work is very context-specific but cash is usually preferable since it gives people more choices.

## Peace-building

The achievements of ActionAid's peace-building programmes have been well documented elsewhere<sup>6</sup>, but must be noted here as post-emergency work,

## Burundi: 'Reflect'<sup>7</sup> approach as a peace-building initiative

Immediately after the crisis in Burundi, ActionAid played an intermediary role of encouraging the two communities (those remaining in communities and internally displaced persons camps) to engage in discussion around how the two communities could be reintegrated. Typically the discussion committees consisted of a mix of Hutu and Tutsi and would meet on neutral ground. Together the two groups discussed and agreed criteria for the return of the displaced communities.

The committees also discussed the formation of Reflect circles within the reintegrated communities to facilitate long-term peace and development. Through this process, Reflect was implemented in 1997 in 11 areas suffering a high level of conflict and insecurity in the Ruvyiron province.

The objective of the first 11 circles was to promote peace and strengthen the role of women in peace building through literacy. The Reflect initiatives are also part of ActionAid Burundi's wider peace and reconciliation programme. Local and national Reflect manuals were devised with themes from the communities, with a focus on peace as part of a long-term development strategy. Reflect circle participants play an important role in influencing the attitudes and behaviour of the wider community in relation to peace building and trust within communities.

'Peace Building through Communication in Burundi' Jane Bennett, 2001

which incorporate a long-term approach. This combines practical activities with education and activities designed to inform local communities, often providing a concrete focus within which conflicting groups can begin to work together.

Notable peace building programmes include:

**Sierra Leone and Liberia** - working to rehabilitate young ex-combatants of both sexes.

**Burundi** - where the entire development programme is based around post-conflict recovery and prevention.

**Somaliland** - where ActionAid worked with elders to promote local governance after the war.

**Ghana** - where ActionAid mediated between conflicting tribal factions and supported workshops on peace building for community leaders and district authorities.

## Opportunity in emergencies

Just as 'recovery plus' results in benefits, so emergencies may offer opportunities to achieve people's long-term goals and improving their lives. Fundamental changes of power in society are needed to eradicate poverty. Such changes are more likely to happen during emergencies when existing power structures are disrupted.

In the severe floods of early 2000, ActionAid-Mozambique undertook an HIV/AIDS awareness programme for people in displaced camps. The people then dispersed to their home areas, with key contact people in each place with whom the programme can continue to work. This coverage would not have been possible under normal conditions when people cannot spare the time to sit for several hours to discuss such issues. Boreholes for the new settlements also conformed with long-term goals for clean water supply, and a new Vitamin-A rich variety of sweet potato was introduced during emergency planting material distributions, which aims to improve long term food security and nutrition.

AA Mozambique, Emergencies Review 2001

"The cash for work programme was very popular in the villages visited, with people pleased with the results (which included scrub clearance to ease access to water sources and productive agricultural land). However, the prime motivation was for the cash, as very few other labour opportunities exist. An indicator of the impact of the success of the project is that several labourers explained that cash for work had been the difference between them staying in the village with their families, rather than migrating away for work. The importance of maintaining family systems of support and welfare should not be underestimated, especially at a time when the number of dependants (widows, orphans, disabled) has increased dramatically ..."

ActionAid India, Gujarat (post-earthquake recovery 2001)

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies



A women's reflect dance group singing about peace and reconciliation in their community, Burundi

In Malawi, local people set up nurseries for drought-resistant crop varieties following drought responses. These now form a major part of the agricultural development programme. Measures to improve the environment – to protect it from both drought and flood – have also added to the overall programme.

ActionAid India viewed responses to the Orissa cyclone and Gujarat earthquake as an opportunity to tackle the underlying social, economic and political reasons for the vulnerability of the poor. ActionAid's improved understanding of why these people are likely to be affected by emergencies is informing long-term programming.

In Burundi, Ethiopia and Kenya, women's participation in peace-building committees raised their status in the community. They are now more likely to be included in decision-making in development activities, a goal in the gender programme.

### Participation in emergency responses

Building on local knowledge, responding to community priorities, and encouraging the active participation of the communities benefiting from our work are crucial components of a long-term approach to emergencies. Many ActionAid country programmes have managed to involve community members in implementing emergency work. In the Dominican Republic, local men and women, including skilled artisans, were employed in rebuilding houses after Cyclone Georges. In Kenya's Merti programme, community

members were involved in targeting and distribution food aid.

However, encouraging active participation in emergencies has proved difficult in some situations, especially when communities are displaced. Often communities are consulted rather than encouraged to participate in project design and management. This is particularly true in country programmes with less emergency experience, where normal ActionAid principles such as participation and gender analysis are considered difficult in an emergency. This may be the case in the early stages of a rapid onset disaster, but is unlikely to be true in later phases. As can be seen from the extract in the box below, ActionAid India's initial response after the earthquake did not involve the affected communities.

**“Utopian levels of participation were impossible immediately after the earthquake due to trauma, disruption and lack of trust (on both sides). It seems that the Sneh Samuday (Community of love and hope) concept was therefore necessarily top down in its original design, with little possibility for participation – even by implementing partners. However, it seems that the design team’s analysis was correct with community members consulted seemingly content with Sneh Samuday’s role and activities. Part of the project concept was to immediately have a presence in the communities - under the guise of psycho-social counselling and the creation of child day care centres. This enabled the recruitment of volunteers within the community and the development of trust between the implementing NGO, community volunteers and the community as a whole.”**

ActionAid India, Gujarat, Emergencies Review 2001

Good participation is more likely in established project areas and in programmes with an integrated approach to emergencies and development. ActionAid's experience shows that in extremely politicised and severely disrupted situations (such as displacement), participation needs careful planning to avoid perceptions of bias, as ActionAid found in Bundibugyo, Uganda.

### Representation and power relations in communities

Looking into rights reminds us that communities are not alike and the obvious leaders may not represent some groups.

**In Zambezia, Mozambique, local people played no active part in managing the aid response. However, community leaders were consulted on seed kit components (although their recommendations were not all included in the standardised kits) and on targeting dilemmas (such as splitting the seed kits to cover more households). It is not clear, however, to what extent their views represented different groups of people in the community, especially the least powerful. In some places, people did not plant seeds because they were not the required type.**

ActionAid Mozambique, Emergencies Review 2001

Unless poor and vulnerable people are treated as essential participants, the agency may be reinforcing the very norms, which marginalised them.

**In Bangladesh, community disaster management committees were set up on cyclone-prone islands, consisting of men and women from poor households who had undergone disaster preparedness training. However, the need for the committees was originally perceived by programme staff, rather than identified by the community (although it was discussed in the training groups). In addition, although committee members were supposed to take active leadership roles in the community at times of emergency, the key to the first aid box and other materials was kept at the local ActionAid office.**

ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergency Review 2001

### Whose emergency is it?

Using an analysis of how poor people can claim their rights, and with the aim of empowering vulnerable people, we are forced to look more deeply into the meaning of 'participation'. Unless affected people are involved in different ways in deciding what their needs are, the impact of any emergency intervention is not likely to be limited. Several country programmes have noted this lesson.

**“ICDPP (community preparedness programme) would have been more effective had they facilitated a process for the community to see needs and solutions for themselves.”**

ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001

### Learning to be flexible

In rapid-onset emergencies, fully involving local people can be difficult and decisions have to be made by outsiders based on assumptions, backed up by consultations with local institutions and the affected communities. Ideally, local staff and partners familiar with the local culture will be involved. In the past, ActionAid programmes have made centralised decisions about how to respond to emergencies without using the knowledge of local staff, let alone the communities concerned.



Destruction caused by the rapid onset of the Gujarat earthquake on 26th January 2001

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

**The decision on how to respond was made in Freetown. We only targeted farmers and many people were not registered.”**

**Staff member, Sella Limba, Sierra Leone (1997)**

**“The women said, “Our husbands had no lungi but each woman was given three sarees” ... Having two sarees in rural poor households is usual, three is unusual. In fact, this package was designed centrally by the donor ... which was guided by emotion or romanticism of helping poor flood victim women. But the beneficiaries argue for different options, rooted in needs and the practical situation.”**

**ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001**

In emergencies, it is important not to assume needs and solutions. Yet very often staff are influenced by existing programme procedures. Communities may be presented with a series of options from which to choose, which although considered a shortcut at the time may not pay off. In the long-term one solution may be assumed to fit the whole community, when in fact, different groups may have different needs and a multi-strategy approach might be the answer.

A commitment to ensuring full participation in emergency situations means putting those who benefit from our work at the centre of the response; encouraging decentralised needs

**In Ethiopia in 1994, the country programme was proud of having consulted the community on how to respond to serious crop failures from drought. Staff were happy that farmers requested grain – and even blankets – on credit, rather than as free aid. However, at that time ActionAid-Ethiopia had a policy against free relief and the farmers knew this. Therefore, in a dire situation, they requested what they were likely to get. In fact, many people were unable to pay back the credit, and this adversely affected the development programme. And some vulnerable people such as elderly widows refused the blanket, although they needed it, because they were afraid to increase their debt.**

**ActionAid Ethiopia, Emergency Review 2001**

assessment and project design; and if necessary standing up to donors to make known the local situation and the communities' views.

### Targeting

Targeting (the selection of people within communities) emerges as a challenging issue. While best practice is to involve communities in deciding who is to benefit, this may be difficult immediately after rapid onset disasters or in highly politicised situations. Strict social hierarchies, such as the Indian caste system, bring their own complications, where those most obviously marginalised may mask other pockets of need.

### Gujarat, India – targeting the marginalised, needy or vulnerable?

After the earthquake in Gujarat (as after the Orissa cyclone) ActionAid India initially made a commitment to focus its assistance on the poorest and most vulnerable (including Dalits, Muslims and scheduled castes and tribes), rather than all affected people. The programme argued that working with the community as a whole merely reinforces the structural violence against marginalized people. It was questioned as to whether working mostly with previously identified marginalised groups contradicted the Red Cross Code of Conduct, which states that aid should be given on the basis of need alone. In fact, ActionAid India believes that vulnerability is complex: for instance, women, disabled and elderly people in higher castes may be as vulnerable as apparently poorer castes.

**ActionAid India, Emergencies Review (Gujarat) 2001**

### Tensions and rifts

There are some situations where inappropriate targeting may have negative social impact. More debate is needed on this point in the light of



Extensive flooding in Zambezia, Mozambique, February 2001

ActionAid experience. ActionAid Mozambique's two experiences of floods – in Maputo province in 2000 and in Zambezia in 2001 – both offer interesting perspectives. Targeting food and other goods to displaced people over several months resulted in rifts between them and other community members. There are similar experiences elsewhere, especially where people have been displaced. For instance in Bundibugyo, Uganda, where rural people were displaced by rebel attacks. Host communities were initially helpful and some looked after displaced people in their houses. So when aid arrived, they felt they should also receive something in compensation.

### Ensuring communication and consultation

In Zambezia, Mozambique, lack of consultation with and communication to,

local people about who should receive help (in a normally self-supportive community) led to complaints and riots.

**“When we left the displaced centre we started to receive ... household goods from ActionAid, and the community members didn't want to help us anymore. They insulted us ... They were saying that they had lost their machambas (fields) and they didn't have anything to eat, so they should also receive.”**

**Laurinda Manjate, Buna, Mozambique**

**“Some members of the host community, because they did not get food, endeavoured to steal food from those who were getting.”**

**Camp leader, Bundibugyo, Uganda**

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

## Targeting and registration challenges in Zambezia, Mozambique

Targeting help to those most in need was perceived to be necessary by the provincial government to ensure fair practice, and they expected NGOs to carry it out. This led to resentment by local government who wanted to be in control, and thus undermined the targeting effort. NGOs perceived targeting as necessary mainly because resources were limited (partly because the original estimated figures were not adequate) and because normal good practice in relief implies meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. WFP also expected food to be targeted to those most in need.

NGOs – undertook a house-to-house registration process with community leaders in some places – during which detailed data of each household was collected and fed into a computerised system. This raised community expectations as everyone registered expected to receive something. Some people were missed because of difficulty in accessing areas for registration (in a flood situation this possibly means some of the worst affected people were missed), and because people were moving from place to place as the waters rose or receded. The registration team who did not speak the local language may also have made some mistakes in local names.

Differing selection criteria for different components also caused confusion. For food eligibility, households had to have lost both their house and their crops; for seed and tools, loss of crops alone was the criterion. Relief criteria were applied to recovery measures: old and disabled people were prioritised for seeds and tools. This was confusing to many community members, since they considered such people less productive.

In the case of food, the general outcry was that everyone should be treated equally. “People asked if they could give half to their friends”, recalls the Oram local manager. It was especially difficult since the original WFP relief food had been distributed without targeting. There seems to have been a genuine need on behalf of most of the population, and a genuine

community tradition of sharing. Monitors found this situation very difficult to deal with.

**“As the suffering in the community is the same, if something is to be given it has to be for all. We had an experience in this place where many people opposed the registered people – asking, are we not affected also, and poor? For us in the field it was painful and difficult to answer them.”**

Distribution monitors, Maganja da Costa

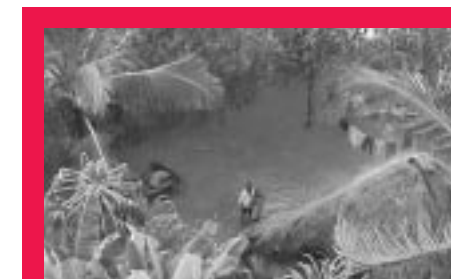
The lack of communication to those communities that benefited (and those that didn't) over the targeting criteria led to an ironic situation, whereby the registration cards were seen as discriminating in favour of the powerful. The perception was that cards were given to those with links to the chiefs, or even those with supernatural powers. The fact that some vulnerable categories were prioritised (e.g. widows) but not others (such as mothers with young children), added to the confusion. This appears to have been mystifying to the community generally and resulted in conflict (a riot in one case when surplus food was taken back to the warehouse), but also in much sharing of received goods. The conclusion is that in this case the targeting exercise was futile and rendered the response less rather than more effective.

### Lessons learned

- House-to-house data collection raises expectations - targeting processes must be carefully explained.
- Representatives of the communities that receive help should be involved in decisions on targeting.
- Selection criteria must be transparent and clearly communicated.
- A tradition of helping each other in the community where almost everyone is affected makes selection inappropriate.
- Imposing selection criteria is even harder where earlier aid has been given to everyone.

ActionAid Mozambique, Emergency review 2001

Targeting as a method of working may be inappropriate, if there is little difference between groups in a community and the emergency has affected almost everyone. Equally, those most visibly affected may be targeted and other groups (whose livelihoods may be badly damaged) left out. This was an issue in Mozambique where aid was initially allocated to those who had lost houses but not those who had lost their crops.



Communities use their resourcefulness having been hit by floods in Zambezia, Mozambique

**“The aid was more beneficial to people who had cards, which had no meaning because the floods affected everyone.”**

Divorced mother, Marrabuanha, Mozambique

**“In the question of targeting many families were left out because they were not affected physically ... but they have been affected because of the disrupted livelihood system.”**

ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001

If immediate relief is the aim, then it may be sufficient to select only those physically affected; however, the above experiences suggests that in recovery programmes it is important to assess everyone.

### Re-examining the concept of targeting

ActionAid's experience also suggests that the whole concept of targeting needs to be re-examined. Targeting has become a norm, seen by donors and others as 'best practice': supporting the idea that only the really needy should benefit. In fact, it is resource-driven and increasingly used as an excuse for allocating insufficient resources and even as justification for 'dumping' unwanted goods. In Zambezia, household items left over from the flood response in the south were allocated to widows and disabled people, mainly “because the numbers fitted”. They were not distributed as part of any clear strategy, such as support to displaced families, or as going-home recovery kits, and the targeting was mystifying to staff and local people. Other programmes have similar experiences.

**“Targeting can be embarrassing. Cooking pots were not given to anyone except pregnant and lactating women ... We need to consult the community at the initial stage, not tell them later.”**

Staff member, Kambia, Sierra Leone

There is clear evidence that people will reject inappropriate or illogical targeting criteria. Even if this does not take the form of overt protest, they will quietly redistribute goods as they see fit.

**“The ones who did not receive went to their relatives who shared something with them.”**

Male farmers, Sironge, Mozambique

**“In fact 75 per cent of people in this project area needed assistance although only 65 per cent were registered ... People were very cooperative and shared amongst themselves”.**

Local leader, Koro Gale, Ethiopia

ActionAid programmes now have experience of emergency targeting in many different situations. These experiences need to be shared and analysed so that lessons can be learned which will shape future activities. The rights-based approach offers a useful framework for revisiting the concept of targeting and reformulating policy and recommended practice, according to the different circumstances encountered.

### Working with Partners

Relations with partners (including local government) have sometimes proved problematic in achieving short-term goals, although such collaboration usually offers opportunities to strengthen partnerships and further long-term aims.

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

The learning so far seems to indicate that crucial factors are the existing level of capacity, and existence/quality of the prior relationship. Where new partners have been taken on for the emergency there has been mixed success, with the need for more hands-on monitoring, training and support (even in report-writing and evaluation) than might be the case in a development programme. Where monitoring is carried out, this needs to be in an atmosphere of trust and collaboration or partners may view it as 'policing'. This is usually easier

where a prior relationship exists, but even so, the emergency context may bring new pressures. Programmes in Mozambique, India, Bangladesh, and Guatemala have experienced this.

ActionAid Bangladesh, however, has positive experiences in building on partner agencies' and is now forming three hazard-specific groups involving staff from 60 partner organisations to develop their disaster management capacity.

Another risk where partners are already operational is that targeting may be biased towards their existing constituent groups (as can happen in any NGO project, with or without local partners). The lesson here is to be aware of the risks at the design stage of the project, and encourage open discussion with partners to reach agreement on targeting and other issues. Within this process there is also an opportunity to expose partners to the Code of Conduct and Sphere standards, and

agree the implications arising for that particular project.

Financial and reporting requirements may require special attention, especially when working with several partners and/or when a large amount of funding is received from a major appeal or donor. ActionAid India's Gujarat programme was commended in the DEC evaluation for its thorough approach.

All these issues add to the pressures of planning an emergency programme, often under very demanding circumstances. However, according to country programmes' experience (for instance, Mozambique and Guatemala) it is important to resist the temptation to see partners as extra capacity which will relieve ActionAid's role, but rather expect to put in more work at the outset to support partners in order to reap dividends - and improve chances of sustainability - later on. Conditions of the partnership should also be openly discussed and agreed by both parties.

**“Careful monitoring, including the deployment of agency staff to work with the NGO partners in the field, was ignored by ActionAid Bangladesh. Though staff were deployed, monitoring of relief and rehabilitation work was absent. Close monitoring could contribute to repairing the lapses caused by the centrally designed emergency work, e.g., the back home package.”**

**“ActionAid staff did weighing of the relief materials during distribution ... It made the distribution process lengthy. The partner agency called it policing ... saying, ‘ActionAid Bangladesh is testing our transparency and accountability’.”**

ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergency Review 2001

**“Some DEC member agencies assessed their partners’ financial management capacity before entering into partnership. In addition, capacity building support was provided. ActionAid’s internal audit team visited each of their partners twice since July 2001: once to check systems and make specific recommendations for improvement, and a second time to check vouchers. ActionAid’s partnership agreement stipulated that partners had to undergo an ActionAid internal audit.”**

DEC Gujarat Earthquake Evaluation Report 2001

## Gender, generation and disability

There is a tendency to make gender, generation, and disability analyses lower priorities in emergencies. The pressure to address the needs of the whole society makes it hard to maintain a focus on the most disadvantaged groups.

In some cases, gender analysis has been used to good effect, not only targeting special needs but also enabling marginalized people to gain more control, and possibly reducing their future vulnerability. In others, it has been overlooked in the rush to respond to a crisis. As with participation, gender analysis is a crucial component of the long-term approach, to be applied as early as possible in a given situation.

Most gender-based interventions tend to be women-focused, sometimes showing limited analysis. Women may be targeted because of their perceived vulnerability rather than through a real needs assessment.

**“One cow was given to each of many households ... This might generate economic ‘power’ of the women. But the beneficiaries went through hardship managing fodder for the cow. The flood disaster caused a fodder crisis in the area. Moreover, many beneficiaries had no experience in cow rearing. However, the study team believed the cow generated a dream for the woman to be able to earn a good income after one or two years.”**

ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001

## Involving men and women

As in development programmes, gender in emergencies means looking at roles and needs of all groups and both sexes. Sometimes the higher risk exposure of women means male survivors have special needs. In the Gujarat, post-earthquake programme ActionAid India targeted single fathers, owing to the high proportion of women killed in the earthquake because they were at home.

The studies show that where emergency programmes have targeted women, there may be a better immediate impact but structural needs are not being met. Some gender-based activities have brought about structural change and given power to some people, but in most cases it is too early to know whether such change will last.

## Understanding local culture and social norms

In obviously male-dominated societies, women are structurally disadvantaged and it is very difficult to challenge the norms. For instance, in ActionAid Bangladesh there is a gender committee and good awareness of gender issues. This is used in efforts to involve women's participation and target their needs, but other issues are much harder to address. Local partners, for example, may find it difficult to denounce openly the scapegoating of women for men's misdeeds.



Women planning activities for the community, post-cyclone, Orissa, India

**“According to the staff of the partner NGO, the dependency relation of poor people has been reduced by the intervention, as in some cases they were involved in the planning and operational process. This made poor people – especially women – empowered through involving them in planning, providing them with adequate information about the type of intervention and the place to collect materials ... As they had to collect materials from the office their mobility increased, their capacity to bargain with the staff increased which in turn gave them confidence to interact with the community. According to the NGO, the degree of empowerment is higher for beneficiaries who have been involved long-term with the NGO.”**

ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

8 Houses for widows, orphans, and old people without families who had lost their homes in the cyclone.

**Gender imbalance with the PNS (committees) is cause for concern. One woman demanded to know what would be the purpose of volunteering to the committee. In this particular case, the concerned woman leader of the self-help group had to make many trips to the Block office and the District headquarters to get the group registered and obtain a bank account. The inconvenience and loss of valuable labour days were issues of concern that had not been addressed. Engaging men in the discussion on their willingness to facilitate meetings in a manner that women could be involved are vital to the process.**

**The PNS are perceived as men's committees as they handle the sought after food for work programme and the self-help groups as the women's committees. The bifurcation of issues for the purpose of functioning has led to a gender division of roles and responsibilities ... Also representation of women at the inter-village PNS meetings is visible which could constrain future directions.**

**DFID report, ActionAid India (Orissa) 2000**

While women's participation in Bangladesh appears not to have been of prime importance in the strategic

planning of the programme, there is evidence that women were given power and influence in the choice of community improvements through food-for-work. Women were encouraged to participate mainly in cleaning and renovation food-for-work activities. It is notable that women's participation increased greatly with each phase of the project. In the early post-disaster stages women's participation was only 11 per cent (which the programme believes is due to their personal domestic recovery needs), increasing to 60 per cent in the third rehabilitation phase. The lesson here is that while women should have rights to participate in food-for-work programmes, this sometimes results in overburdening their workload. With some more research, ActionAid's experience in Orissa could contribute to the debate on this issue.

In Orissa, there is also evidence of the early marriage of girl orphans, who are seen as a burden on the families taking care of them and/or are being married for the compensation they received. The latter is also true of some widows. This is a difficult issue to address since it resides in local culture and social norms. The experience offers an opportunity for ActionAid India to use a rights-based analysis to review whether more could have been done to reverse this trend, and what kind of monitoring and/or influencing framework could be used in future similar situations.



Villagers are taught how they can carry a patient to another centre in case of need during a cyclone, Bangladesh

### Designing appropriate approaches

Bangladesh's cyclone preparedness programme's (ICDPP) separate training sessions were designed to allow women to attend without breaking the purda custom. This was fairly successful but only after local discussions with religious leaders, husbands and mothers-in-law (which had not initially been planned as part of the programme) to ensure women were allowed to attend. Since the women had little or no education, very little experience of group interaction and had to bring small children with them, the training was much more difficult than with men. The lesson here is that better planning with these constraints in mind might have increased the impact. We also learn from this programme that it is difficult to challenge local norms to increase women's participation as decision-makers. While many women greatly valued the training and learned new skills, it is not clear whether they will have the opportunity to use them on a permanent basis in the community and it is unlikely that their status has changed as a result.



Villagers are shown how they can store food by keeping it underground in preparation for a cyclone, Bangladesh

**"The women said that due to basic disaster preparedness training they became more confident to face the crisis situation due to natural disaster. Those who received first aid training said that due to the training they became more capable of providing primary medical care for their families and neighbours. However there is no visible evidence observed about the change of women's position in the community."**

**"The actual participation of females in the disaster management committee is less than the males. Females are mainly responsible as first aid volunteers and rescue and survey volunteers, but the first aid box has been kept in the house of the chief volunteer (male) and the key in the ActionAid office."**

**ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001**

**"In the past no-one dared to argue with council members and chairmen ... Now women become Ainjaj (one who deals with law) ... Now women can organise themselves quickly, can start bargaining if a husband starts beating up his wife".**

**"My wife collected and saved 50 kgs of rice. She does not permit me to touch the rice ... She also told me that now we will manage the food by earning and will only consume the stock when we are in crisis."**

**"As long as I (the wife) could bring relief materials, I had value/respect in the household. "**

**"As soon as the relief and rehabilitation work stopped, we became dependent again on the husband."**

**ActionAid Bangladesh, Emergencies Review 2001**

### Improving women's position

There are a few instances of improvements in women's social or economic position, some achieved by design and some by chance. However, such impact needs to be monitored over a period of time to know whether lasting change has taken place and if so, how such change can be replicated in future.

### Generation analysis

Closely linked to gender analysis is generation analysis: another useful tool in assessing abilities, needs and rights, and differing priorities. Several ActionAid programmes have been successfully wholly or partially targeted at children and youth. For instance, Sierra Leone's 'youth in crisis' post-conflict programme, Bangladesh's community disaster preparedness activities, India's *mamta gruha*<sup>8</sup> post-cyclone programme for

widows and orphans and Uganda's education project in displaced camps.

Less specific focus is given to the needs and rights of elderly people, although they are sometimes included as a vulnerable category. The Orissa cyclone programme was a notable exception. Emergencies may disempower older people, undermining their role in the family and community – or they may suddenly gain new demanding responsibilities (as in Gujarat, where so many mothers were killed in the earthquake). ActionAid could develop its recovery phase expertise in this area. In the past, there have been some occasions where the needs of both the very young and very old were not fully met, especially in food aid programmes where inappropriate World Food Programme rations were distributed.

# 3 Highlights of Approaches to Emergencies

9 DCA – District Coordinating Agency

## Disability

In Gujarat early work in the villages highlighted the ways in which the disabled people were being denied their rights. ActionAid included this into their programme and worked with specialist organisations to provide appropriate support.



Zarina, left paralysed by the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001 takes a walk on a bamboo walking frame built by her husband.

**Despite the fact that the earthquake caused a huge increase in numbers of disabled persons, only a single DEC member (ActionAid) has given this issue priority.**

**DEC Evaluation of Indian Earthquake, 2002**

## Advocacy and influencing

Several country programmes have taken opportunities to speak for poor people and influence authorities in emergency situations and issues. This can produce an impact as effective as direct intervention, and helps to raise ActionAid's profile. A coordination role is not a prerequisite for influencing and advocacy work, although again a long-term presence and working relations with local institutions can be helpful.

Both ActionAid Mozambique and ActionAid Kenya successfully lobbied the World Food Programme (WFP) to target their areas of operation in Zambezia and Isiolo respectively. In Kenya, this led to ActionAid overseeing the WFP operation in Isiolo district. ActionAid Uganda raised the alarm about floods in Apac with government and media, and raised awareness of the need for education of children displaced by conflict in Kitgum and Bundibugyo. In 2000, ActionAid Malawi lobbied the Ministry of Agriculture to convince them that the drought in Karonga was serious and needed a response, based on social indicators of stress (people were selling assets). This was also an opportunity to influence government thinking of emergency response as saving livelihoods, not only lives.

Choosing the right partners can increase influencing potential. In the Dominican Republic, ActionAid was able to raise awareness of the plight of Haitian immigrants after Cyclone Georges by working through several local NGOs, all of whom focused on championing the rights of immigrants. In Bangladesh, ActionAid piloted embankment management combined with helping poor people to gain their land. This work was continued by a local NGO.

### Promoting settlers' rights to reduce vulnerability

**More than 47 percent of people in Bangladesh are landless, and this number is increasing due to poverty, exploitation and river erosion. 'Khas' land is allocated by the government to landless settlers, but in fact is often occupied or controlled by the elite. Many settlers therefore live on embankments, which are extremely vulnerable during cyclones or tidal surges. In cyclone-prone Bhola district, ActionAid together with two other NGOs promoted the participation of settlers in embankment maintenance – this reduced the vulnerability of the wider community – as well as establishing land rights for the settlers.**

**ActionAid Bangladesh Emergency Review, 2001**

## Coordination and collaboration

Some country programmes have enjoyed considerable success in coordination of emergency responses at both national and local levels. This can raise the agency's profile, enhancing impact through increased access to resources and influencing opportunities.

In Malawi and Mozambique, such activity in emergencies has also increased ActionAid's influencing potential in non-emergency situations. In Malawi, ActionAid's work on emergency seed distribution influenced the government strategy on seed and other agricultural support to poor farmers. Their involvement in recurring emergencies led to a higher profile and better cooperation with government ministries and other NGOs.

In the Mozambique floods of 2000, ActionAid Mozambique coordinated information for the seeds and tools programme at a national level, and at a provincial level for water sector activities in Manhica. Building on this experience in 2001, they took the lead role in the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) forum during floods in Zambezia Province. This involved continuous liaison with government ministries (notably Health and Agriculture) at provincial level as well as daily meetings and discussions with the other NGOs.

The DEC forum had a ready-made credibility with the government, due to their role in the previous floods and their ready access to funds. This collaboration on a joint proposal was innovatory and as a principle could provide a new model for future emergency responses.

After the Orissa cyclone, ActionAid India took the role of District Coordination Agency in Jagatsinghpur, one of the worst affected districts. ActionAid India advocated for standardisation of food-for-work, and after discussion with the state level coordination committee, the Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority adopted their suggestions.

Sensitively done, coordination work can support the role of local government, improving local communities' activities and influencing policy. It can be the basis for tackling rights-based issues and fits well within the long-term approach. Each context will be different and many will be challenging – again, a long-term presence and prior local contacts are usually an advantage. An agency with a long-term presence in the area (and good local contacts) is also more likely to succeed in a coordination role in recovery and rehabilitation activities than an agency which arrives on the scene for relief and rescue.

**“ActionAid because of its large scale of operation in the cyclone-affected area, long-term commitment, integrated rehabilitation approach and its rapport with the district administration was chosen as the DCA<sup>9</sup> of Jagatsinghpur district“.**

ActionAid India, DFID report, 2000

# 4 Developing Innovative Approaches to Emergency Work

This section examines in more detail some of the more recent innovative approaches that ActionAid have used in their emergency work.

ActionAid has built on skills and expertise in development programmes to pioneer some many innovative approaches in its development interventions, including emergency work. Such innovations sit well with a long-term approach, since all represent new ways of using developmental principles to respond to emergency needs. There is a clear commitment to building on local resources and focusing on poor people's priorities.

## Examples of such work include:

- Ghana, Kenya, and Ethiopia. Using community knowledge and participation to improve early warning of drought and promote appropriate response. The grain banks set up to respond to food crises in Bawku, Ghana, originated in discussions with farmers about local communities being involved in the whole process of assessing change and influencing on-going activities.
  - Malawi. Distributing local maize seed, as requested by farmers rather than government-promoted hybrid seed. This was the first time the UK government funded seed distribution from emergency funds.
  - Kenya. Subsidised livestock markets as support to pastoralists facing drought rather than just providing for immediate food needs.
  - Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. Use of credit as an emergency response.
  - Bangladesh. Training communities how to prepare for disasters in cyclone-prone areas. Using children's drama as a way of explaining to local communities how to best cope with disasters.
- This is a good example of using the most appropriate form of communication to focus on how local people can take on particular roles and responsibilities.
- Sierra Leone and Liberia. Working with young ex-combatants to overcome the trauma of war and to offer new employment skills to help improve their recovery and maintain the peace.
  - Somaliland, Sierra Leone and Burundi. Supporting community sport as a way of encouraging peace building and improving local communities' ability to recover from the effects of war.
  - Orissa, India. Use of social audit in post cyclone recovery to promote transparency and accountability through regular public scrutiny of how agencies worked and what they spent, by the communities who benefited from their actions.
  - Burundi, Uganda. The use of Reflect in camps for displaced people in Uganda, and for peace-building and helping communities to recover after the conflict in Burundi.

All the above build on existing strengths, such as local knowledge, community groups or tools and techniques borrowed from development programmes. Thus, risk has been minimal.

However, innovation can be risky. It means trying out new ideas with little precedent, or applying old ideas to different situations. Sometimes such initiatives prove less successful than expected. For instance, emergency credit has had a bad effect on long-term credit programmes because of poor repayment (see Ethiopia case study on emergency credit) especially where repeated crises have occurred. Through this, however, ActionAid has gained considerable experience in an innovative practice.

Risk is sometimes essential to break new ground and to improve on old strategies. By building on existing strengths in new ways, the risk can be minimised. Even if the new approach proves unsuccessful, substantial learning can be gained if there is transparent review and reflection. An innovative spirit can encourage fresh analysis of each situation (and thus more appropriate responses), rather than re-running old formulae.

## Psycho-social support

Support given to relieve trauma need not only be psychiatry. Other social activities can provide practical assistance to help people come to terms with their experiences. This is important.

**“Unforeseen events impacted to some extent on the credit repayment. The first and major contributing factor ... is credit overburdening. The second came in the form of heavy rain and flooding which destroyed much of the wheat/teff seed given as emergency credit, leaving some people with an extra loan but little production to show for it. At a later stage, government taxes for the last three years were imposed, together with repayment of government fertilizer loans forcing difficult decisions based on the one hand on loyalty to ActionAid Ethiopia and the desire to maintain future access to ActionAid Ethiopia, and on the other the belief that the government might remove cattle, land or other assets if they don't receive repayment. In addition, production levels in 1996 were patchy across the project areas with some experiencing crop failure. The need to respond to this, but awareness of credit overburdening, has influenced ActionAid Ethiopia to develop a disaster prevention response on a cash-for-work basis”.**

ActionAid Ethiopia, Desk Review of Dalocha Emergency Credit 2001

**“People who have not been able to generate an interpretation of what has happened, and who find events incomprehensible, are likely to feel the most helpless and unsure what to do.”**

Derek Summerfield, quoted in *The Selfish Altruist*, Tony Vaux 2001

Although this is a relatively new area of involvement for ActionAid, it could be a focus for more discussion and analysis, especially when comparing approaches in conflict and natural disasters. It fits well within the long-term approach and can be combined with practical livelihood support.

For example, in the response to India's Gujarat earthquake, ActionAid was delivering “hope” as a mainstay of the programme that aimed to “Bring back a semblance of normality”. Practical therapies included setting up day care centres, facilities for play and informal education for children, psycho-social counselling, medical treatment, physiotherapy support and rehabilitation planning for the injured and disabled. The analysis of how people could claim their rights, which helped to shape the programme, also assisted those who were grieving to access government compensation.

## Developing Innovative Approaches

**“ActionAid’s expression of care for the vulnerable was part of an integrated approach which included a rights approach and extensive work on practical support. Our conclusion is that, after a shaky start in the relief phase, ActionAid has found a balanced approach, being sensitive to individual cases of extreme grief but generally placing the issue in a well-researched social and political context.”**

**DEC Gujarat Earthquake Evaluation Report 2001**

As part of its ‘youth in crisis’ project, in Sierra Leone, ActionAid has used a practical approach in working with young people, including ex-combatants. It is helping these young traumatised, marginalized and disempowered people to recover and become reconciled to each other by organising games and sports between previously warring factions. The programme also offers a social education programme focusing on issues such as peace building, reconciliation, reproductive health and civic responsibilities. In Liberia, children made peace gardens, where they can bury toys representing memories of the war.

In other programmes, Reflect circles and other community groups have formed a basis for social support. Although probably not labelled as

psycho-social work it seems likely that there are psycho-social aspects of other projects, especially in peace-building programmes, which have not been highlighted during the course of this study.

There are ongoing debates about the suitability of Western-style psychology approaches and terminology in different cultures. Clearly, it would be counter-productive to undermine local custom when caring for grieving people and offering mutual support. ActionAid is in a good position to undertake research on what works best in which circumstances, and to influence policy and practice.

### Accountability

There is increasing pressure on organisations to demonstrate and improve their social performance and accountability. In the humanitarian assistance system accountability is increasingly coming under the political and media spotlight as well as internal scrutiny, as a way to improve performance.<sup>10</sup>

Central to the spirit of *Fighting poverty together* is our accountability to the poor and marginalised women, men, boys and girls with whom we work.

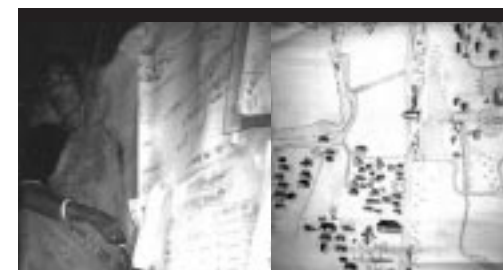
ActionAid’s Accountability Learning and Planning System (ALPS) encourages this by promoting greater participation and transparency in all our work and empathy with the poor and marginalised groups with whom we

work. To do any of this there must first be a genuine desire to make participation real. This doesn’t happen overnight and there may well be conflicts of interest, for example when it comes to discussions around how much money is available to work in the community.

If poor and marginalised groups are to participate effectively in a project and make it their own, it makes sense for them to also have a part in the decision-making process on how funds are being spent. Already, projects invest in training local people in credit management, book keeping and other basic financial skills.

### Greater public accountability – ‘People’s Hearings’ in Orissa

**ActionAid India is developing an accountability process based on the principles of social audit. A notable example of how this is being developed is the work being done in Orissa in the wake of the disastrous cyclone that occurred in 1999. As part of the response to the disaster in the Orissa region, ActionAid India, along with partner organisation Bharatiya Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) started a food-for-work initiative with the help of village reconstruction committees. They used this approach as a strategy for mobilising the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of the community to support them in asserting their rights.**



Maps put together by the community as part of the social audit process, Orissa, India, July 2001

ActionAid India and BGVS use ‘people’s hearings’ as a way for all the community to have access to information regarding the food-for-work programme, thereby ensuring transparency and a means of curbing corruption. Part of this process involves displaying day-to-day work charts in public areas. These charts

contain basic information: the number of persons working that day; the nature of their work; rice stocks at BGVS’ disposal; cash disbursement schedules etc. During scheduled ‘people’s hearings’, community members are able to refer to these diagrams, ask questions, clarify concerns and discuss the work going on in the community.

Community groups are clearly holding ActionAid and BGVS accountable for what they say they will do. Greater transparency in ActionAid and BGVS’ work has prompted calls for increased accountability from government and other NGOs.

#### Some issues to be aware of:

- a week was spent with communities to familiarise them with social audit
- the community might not own the process unless it is integrated with planning
- audits should be held at different local and district levels: time and venue need to be carefully arranged to allow everyone to attend, and government officials need to be given advance notice.
- display formats need to be simplified so that everyone can understand them
- men can dominate the questions, silencing women
- the presence of influential people can make people reluctant to raise sensitive issues.

Organisational development strategies need to ensure that adequate resources and time is given to building up these skills and investing in new appropriate skills.

### Rights and needs

The new discourse on rights-based approaches to emergency work has tended to result in polarised debates, which situate needs (usually

characterised by service delivery) and rights (empowering beneficiaries) at opposite ends of the spectrum.

In fact, needs and rights are not mutually exclusive and often relate directly to each other. This is common sense and is central to the *Fighting poverty together* strategy, which links advocacy and influencing with direct action. It is important that ActionAid’s experience in this area is documented and that its real work on the ground contributes to external policy debates which can become over-theorised.

**“The direct service delivery of shelter, psychosocial, nutritional and financial support to affected people can be interpreted in terms of realisation of peoples rights. More than this, the Sneh Samuday response is aimed at creating a vibrant rights-aware environment encouraging individuals themselves to claim their rights at household, community and Government level. For example, by supporting women to speak up against violence in the home and by supporting the efforts of lower castes to be involved in community decision making (e.g. cash for work). Furthermore, the Sneh Samuday concept “scales-up” by recognising the prime responsibility of the state to ensure the well-being and rights of its people.”**

**ActionAid India, Emergencies Review (Gujarat) 2001**

<sup>10</sup> Peter Raynard, *Mapping Accountability in Humanitarian Assistance*, 2000

4

## Developing Innovative Approaches

### ActionAid India, Gujarat Earthquake: Summary of Programme Components

Component		Aim	Activities
Sneh	Caring	To strengthen caring responsibilities of the community through physical assistance to the most vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shelter, rations,</li> <li>Setting up (semi-permanent) community centres.</li> </ul>
Asha	Hope	Bring back a semblance of normality, especially to children, injured, disabled and those who are in severe trauma and provide a listening ear for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting up day care centres</li> <li>Play and informal education for children</li> <li>Psychosocial counselling (referral if necessary)</li> <li>Medical and physiotherapy support to injured and disabled</li> <li>Long-term planning for the rehabilitation of disabled.</li> </ul>
Adhikar	Rights	Assist people with obtaining their entitlements and compensation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information dissemination through theatre and workshops</li> <li>Assistance and follow up with claims</li> <li>Formation of organisation of Dalits and marginalised.</li> </ul>
Shram	Labour	Rehabilitation whilst providing assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash-for-work programme</li> <li>Livelihood development (e.g. training through women's groups)</li> </ul>

In the Dominican Republic, ActionAid's response to Cyclone Georges was implemented mainly by partner organisations already working on rights issues related to Haitian immigrants living in slums. Targeting the immigrants therefore took on a rights-based approach from the outset, and the programme used reconstruction as a platform for raising awareness of their living conditions as well as responding to immediate needs. This resulted in 'recovery plus' impact: houses were rebuilt more spaciouly and latrines were constructed. Local and international advocacy has resulted in long-term fundraising links with Dominicans and Haitians living in the US.

Opportunities to protect or promote the rights of marginalised people have sometimes been missed or ignored. The Bangladesh country study gives an example of some limited action by ActionAid's partner agency to protect women's rights in displaced camps, to the extent that they created awareness but did not champion the victims against local norms.

**"Within a few days, I saw three adolescent girls and young women were raped inside the camp ... I brought complaint to the NGO. They took measures to create public awareness and supplied some polythene so that camp dwellers could make partitions to create purda. This is very unfortunate and painful, but the truth is the young volunteers from powerful families used the polythene to create protected rooms adjacent to the camp, for their sexual violence ... Another girl was kidnapped from the camp, and came back after 15 days ... The people assaulted her and she left the camp ... the NGO did not do anything to protect the victimised girl."**

**Women's group leader, ActionAid Bangladesh Emergencies Review 2001**

A rights approach needs to take careful account of the responsibilities of all involved, especially government. In North East Ghana ActionAid facilitated a process whereby the district assemblies prepared their contingency plans for emergencies, especially a regular outbreak of meningitis. As a result of the planning, the district were able to use all their available resources and avoid a drastic outbreak. There were 861 deaths and over 9,000 cases in 1997, but only six deaths and 75 cases in total from 1999 to 2001.



Children are taught how they can prepare for emergency situations, Bangladesh

**I have never enjoyed so much support in terms of personnel and resources to fight this pandemic. Every department knows what he/she is doing... After this contingency plan our perspectives towards work have been redirected to partnership, which I think is good for the District...**

District Director of Health,  
Bolga Tanga District, Ghana

## 5 Effectiveness of the Long-term Approach

The country studies indicate that a long-term approach – responding to emergencies using ‘developmental’ principles – works well, especially where the agency is already established and active but also outside existing project areas. India’s Gujarat earthquake programme is an example of a new intervention, which aimed to be participatory during relief and recovery phases, and used a rights-based analysis. The long-term approach effectively offers a set of principles, which can be applied wherever practicable, at any stage of emergency-related work. The key components that appear to influence impact the most are:

- community participation
- good contextual analysis and strategic planning based on local knowledge,
- a livelihoods focus
- awareness of differentiated rights, needs and responsibilities (including gender/generation analysis).

In any emergency work there are essentially three levels of impact that can be sought:

- change for individuals/families
- change for communities
- change in aid and governance policy and practice

Sometimes this is complex. For instance, the best impact in a given situation may be different for different individuals. The same intervention will produce positive impact for some and negative impact for others. This applies to the most straightforward relief project addressing emergency needs, as well as more complex interventions addressing longer-term goals. In all cases, the best impact will be impossible to achieve without a strong understanding of the context and the collaboration of the players within it. This is the essence of the ‘long-term approach’.

What can be seen from the reviews is that in many cases people have been left better equipped to deal with future emergencies, or in some way better off than before. This is not achievable with a traditional approach to relief, and is one of the best arguments for maintaining and further developing the ‘long-term’ approach.

It is also very clear that country programmes vary widely in their interpretation (or even awareness) of what constitutes a long-term approach, and further debate and capacity building is needed for its optimum application across the whole organisation. When this is done, ActionAid is in a good position to champion this approach and influence donors and others to support it.



Gujarat, India, 2001

**“The rationale is that credit allows people to be partners rather than passive beneficiaries, reinforcing the overall development programme and approach. What the Dalocha experience illustrates is that credit should not be thought of as an automatically ‘development-friendly’ response, but must be considered carefully within the unique context of each situation. The primary trade-off was between adapting ‘development-friendly intervention’ and increasing the community burden of debt at a vulnerable time.”**

### Misinterpretation of the long-term approach

Ironically, consulting the community and respecting local cultural norms can also be used to reduce the agency’s potential to respond to a crisis. In Ethiopia, farmers requested credit in an emergency because the agency stated they would not do free relief.

In Somaliland, where the programme was reluctant to respond to drought – fearing aid delivery could provoke conflict – elders were consulted as to whether a response was needed, and research on local coping strategies was done, but without a full situational or needs assessment in all areas. The decision not to respond was later justified by the drought not being ‘named’ (and therefore not serious) – despite the fact that droughts are only named after many people and animals have died. This approach, therefore, is not compatible with the principle of early warning and early response, and risks missing pockets of suffering which could have been relieved. True consultation means being ready to consider other suggestions without influencing them. It is too easy to ‘consult’ the community with only a limited range of options.

## 6 Key Issues Arising from the Study Findings

“We didn’t consult the communities because it was an emergency”

Staff member,  
Mozambique 2000

### a Approaches and Attitudes

There are still mixed attitudes to ActionAid’s role in emergencies and poor awareness of the integral role of emergency work in *Fighting poverty together*. Emergencies work is sometimes seen as optional extra, or to be avoided if possible (in case it impacts negatively on long-term programme activities).

Consequently, a variety of approaches to emergency work is evident. This allows for locally relevant solutions but it is easier to learn from one another when the different local solutions relate to a coherent strategy from the whole organisation. In some cases, there is a lack of awareness and/or commitment to the ActionAid emergency strategy and a lack of knowledge or understanding of the ‘long-term’ approach.

There are mixed levels of awareness of the Code of Conduct and Sphere standards, and these are rarely applied in programme design. This may represent a risk to ActionAid’s reputation globally and could affect funding opportunities. This is a dilemma relating to the need for a global identity and coherent policies as against the creative diversity of decentralisation.

Even in programmes, which are committed to a long-term approach, principles governing development programme work are sometimes dispensed with during emergencies.

This sometimes results in a tokenistic response (doing something, but not seriously meeting needs), a top-down approach and/or missed opportunities.

Gender and participation are the two main aspects where opportunities are missed, because the perceived need for speed and urgent response can override normal practice. This can be overcome with training, exchange of learning, experience and specialist support.

Senior management support appears crucial to successful integration of emergency and development work, both in country and globally. This currently often depends on individual experience and priorities. Country directors and senior managers are sometimes selected and trained with little attention to emergency-related work as a core ActionAid activity, and appear to be held less accountable than for other planned programmes.

### b Learning and Change

Resources allocated to programme learning are still few. Reviews and evaluations tend to be donor-led activities. Converting learning into changed practice is still a challenge for many programmes, although some are managing it. ActionAid India’s Gujarat programme is a good example, which incorporated lessons learned in the Orissa cyclone response the previous year.

Such learning was facilitated by involving key staff involved in the Orissa response in the design of Sneh Samuday Gujarat. However, a further important aspect of learning has been the ability to maintain a level of flexibility to respond to changes in the programme environment itself. For example, ActionAid India was initially against the provision of semi-permanent housing in Gujarat. However, it quickly became clear that complications in compensation and adoption would result in reconstruction delays of 2-3 years. Since then the provision, semi-permanent accommodation to the most vulnerable has become a central part of the ActionAid India programme.

ActionAid India, Gujarat, Emergencies Review 2001

This highlights the importance of a flexible approach, so that lessons learned on the spot can influence programme practice. In emergency programmes, this is particularly important since the phases are usually shorter than in development programmes. In Bangladesh, the cyclone preparedness programme (ICDPP) practiced responsive monitoring on a monthly basis, which resulted in several adaptations to the programme. This was particularly important since it was a one-year pilot programme.

### c Going for it

Some programmes seem to ‘pull out all the stops’: display more courage and confidence than others in responding energetically to a difficult situation, even with little prior experience. The ActionAid India response to the Orissa cyclone is an excellent example of this. Conversely, in some situations emergencies work has been kept to a minimum for fear of undermining or interrupting a development programme. Therefore, opportunities to support recovery and resilience (and thus fight poverty) are lost.

Unpicking why this happens in some places and not others is difficult. The ‘go for it’ approach seems to be

characterised by an attitude of compassion and solidarity with the affected community, combined with a vision of humanitarian work as part of the fight against poverty. It also seems to depend on the efforts and prior experience of individual managers. Perhaps the key factors are a combination of solid identity as an organisation and ability to see existing strengths and capacity, which can be built upon. Also, this vision and approach does seem to be more prevalent in the kind of large-scale disaster, which temporarily blocks a continuation of development activities.

### d Rights and needs

A rights-based analysis has yet to filter through to all emergency-related interventions. Rights offer an obvious bridge linking emergency-related projects with development, and if included in the early stages of project design increase the potential for far-reaching impact. More monitoring is needed to ascertain whether prior agency presence and long-term involvement result in better impact, although these studies imply that it is the case. Working through partners may increase the chance of working on rights issues, depending on prior relations and the partner agency’s existing focus.

# 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

## a Recommendations for learning and accountability

### Quality of impact analysis

The study indicates a limited understanding and analysis of impact and its implications. Impact is hard to measure, but deeper and broader analysis could result in better learning. There is a tendency to over-attribute 'saved lives' to ActionAid interventions; on the other hand, unexpected impact and the long-term implications of impact are often overlooked. This may be due to poor awareness of the importance of emergency-related work within the overall programme. Similarly, there is a tendency to focus on inputs/outputs and measurement against targets, rather than the resulting change. Therefore it is important that impact assessment of emergency work receives equal attention in efforts to improve ActionAid's impact assessment overall.

### Impact analysis and programme learning

This study has found it difficult to draw out sufficient strategic analysis within the programme reviews: for instance, of opportunity cost or alternative interventions. It is naturally much easier for programmes to examine what was done, rather than what was not done. Yet, such analysis can produce very useful learning to inform future responses. Emergency interventions are usually designed and implemented according to certain assumptions made

within a complex environment. This is inevitable and acceptable.

In retrospect, however, programme reviews offer a great opportunity to re-examine the strategic decision-making process. In order to seize this opportunity reviews and evaluations should include the questions, "What else could we have done? Could we have used the resources differently to achieve a better outcome? What would we repeat, or do differently, next time?"

### Integral reporting and accountability

Reporting on emergency work is not yet fully integrated with other programme planning and reporting systems. This leaves a gap in accountability and reporting. In order to bridge this gap more emphasis should be placed on emergency work within ALPS. Emergencies work should also be routinely included in country programme reviews. The impact assessment network should be used to exchange learning from emergency evaluations and reviews.

### Research as good practice

ActionAid is in a good position to carry out both 'real time' and longitudinal research, which would support learning processes and improve programme quality and impact, in both preparedness and response. For this to happen, research should be built into project proposals and alternative funding should be explored. It is also

necessary to identify potential research as a standard part of programme review and reflection, and upgrade the profile of research as a legitimate – indeed essential – part of livelihood support work.

### Mainstreaming emergencies

There is insufficient awareness of international staff and partners regarding the important role of humanitarian work in *Fighting poverty together*. This could be improved by increasing staff training and capacity building on emergencies/poverty links and humanitarian principles. There should also be a greater emphasis on ActionAid's humanitarian role in senior management recruitment processes as well as increased accountability and reporting obligations for regional and country directors.

### Accountability to beneficiaries

More internal learning reviews are necessary to complement donor-led evaluations. There should also be more participatory reviews inviting comment from those who benefit from our work. ActionAid India's social audit programme could be shared as a transparency model.

### Learning for change

There should be both continued encouragement for review and reflection processes and regular monitoring to establish to what extent lessons have been learned and policy/practice influenced (internally and externally).

Databases of country programme expertise should be set up so that regions and countries can contact those with experience. Research, experiment and debate on how best to document and share learning within the organisation should be encouraged. Workshops exploring the key principles and related work could be a possible option. In particular, a workshop on targeting to encourage debate, disseminate learning, and influence donors and other agencies.

## b Implications and recommendations for Policy work

- Diversity within coherence: ActionAid's international identity and profile could benefit from a more coherent approach to humanitarian work, within which country programmes could adapt emphasis depending on local contexts.

- Understanding of the 'long-term' approach needs to be disseminated throughout the organisation.

- 'Recovery Plus': this lies at the heart of a long-term approach and ActionAid could become a lead agency on this concept.

- Short-term relief interventions are sometimes necessary and should not be excluded from the long-term approach. The strategy should be to do relief well – within the framework of a long-term analysis.

- A current gap is proactive community preparedness as part of ongoing

development programmes. Each programme should look for opportunities to improve preparedness, increase local capacity to respond and control over relief resources, mitigate effects of emergencies and diminish vulnerability. These can often be achieved by minor adjustments to ongoing work. Relevant questions for each development area are: "What does resilience to emergencies mean here, in this context? How can ActionAid promote and support it?"

- Organisational capacity and preparedness could be achieved through strengthening regional capacity to support emergency work; capacity building for country directors as well as staff; conceptual debate for strategic decision-makers; best practice manuals or intranet sites to assist in programme design.

- ActionAid's long-term presence can be used to advantage in research around emergency issues. The results could raise profile as well as improve quality and impact of work. For this to happen, research must be acknowledged as a valid programme activity and be resourced accordingly.

- Funding needs to be more flexible – ActionAid could lobby donors for funding which better reflects the kind of responses informed by the long-term approach. Country programmes could develop capacity to produce innovative proposals more quickly when funding is available. Internal funding mechanisms need to be

understood and communicated throughout the organisation.

- DEC membership can be used to increase influence and capitalise on coordination and advocacy potential.

## c Recommendations for good practice

The following are recommendations for practices, which will foster the long-term approach and may increase impact in future emergency-related interventions.

### Strategic planning and good contextual analysis

This is vital to give each project the best chance to succeed – it should not be skipped under pressure to act fast. Prior vulnerability analysis and contingency planning should be done to ensure the process does not start from zero each time.

### Multiple analyses: building on existing strengths and local knowledge

Field staff, as well as senior management, need to be involved, to ensure the right information for decision-making and programme design. Beneficiaries and other stakeholders should contribute wherever possible. Beneficiaries should be consulted in needs assessment. This links to:

### Consultation and participation

Participation is closely linked to capacity building in vulnerable communities and is a core principle in any developmental, long-term approach to emergencies. It is the key to maintaining a rights-based,

# 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

**11** Standards and codes agreed by international NGOs that aim to improve the quality of assistance provided to people affected by disasters, and to enhance the accountability of the humanitarian system in disaster response. AA has signed up to both the Code of Conduct and the Sphere standards

empowering focus in emergency-related work, and should not be difficult in places where ActionAid has a prior presence and in predictable or slow onset emergencies. It is therefore recommended that:

- Except in extraordinary circumstances, no project should be designed without a community-based needs assessment.
- Include consultation on priorities with different groups in the community.
- Roles including beneficiaries can then be developed for implementation and management.
- Issues such as payment or other compensation, overburdening (especially in the case of women) and adequate representation of marginal groups should be considered in the local context.

True participation is likely to be difficult in the rescue and relief stages of rapid onset emergencies, especially where the agency has no prior presence. Therefore:

- Plans should be made to ensure that as soon as possible beneficiaries are increasingly included in decision-making and management.

## Targeting

Often there is a relation between poor targeting and inappropriate responses. If the response is prioritised by the affected community and based on clear needs of certain groups, this makes targeting (where necessary) much easier. Attitudes will also inform targeting and participation. Whose emergency is it, and whose goods?

- ActionAid should apply a rights-based analysis to targeting.
- It should be totally justifiable on the basis of need in the current situation, should be context specific, and developed with local customs and culture in mind.
- If resources are insufficient to meet the need, lobby for more.
- The reasons for targeting should be transparent, discussed with the beneficiaries and understood by all concerned.
- Targeting for recovery programmes is likely to be more precise (aimed at certain livelihood groups) than targeting for relief: programmes should plan for this and monitor the evolving situation.

- Wherever possible (which should be in most cases where the emergency is affecting a stable community) community members representing different groups should be in charge of targeting and distribution, with monitoring to ensure lack of bias and corruption.

- Remember ActionAid and other NGOs exist to support communities, not donors.

## Gender

Gender specialists should be regularly involved in design and monitoring of emergencies programmes.

## Monitoring and learning

'Real time' monitoring is recommended, with regular documenting and ongoing impact assessment. Create a revision checklist for main principles of the long-term approach, to be reviewed several times throughout the life of the project. This will help to ensure it remains grounded in the long-term approach and applies known learning to gain maximum impact.

## Standards

Promote regional and in-country awareness of the Code of Conduct and Sphere standards.<sup>11</sup> Use these for programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Monitor where these are/are not useful and feed back to the DEC and Sphere project.

## Partners

Working with partners is a crucial area for future programmes. We recommended that country programme staff:

- consolidate learning to date on working with partners in emergency programmes (a workshop?)
- encourage open analysis and a learning attitude in partners
- improve skills for emergencies as part of ongoing programme
- be involved in contingency planning and capacity analysis
- Communicate the importance of the long-term approach and participatory principles.

## Psycho-social support

Consolidate learning to date and develop guidelines for good practice. These will need to incorporate different approaches according to custom and culture and the type of emergency. Incorporate links with other areas of work and practical activities.

## Long term research

In programme areas where it has a long-term presence, ActionAid is in a very good position to carry out ongoing research. Research into changing vulnerability and resilience can highlight how interventions affect these processes. Follow up research of a small selection of beneficiary families or individuals, at two, three or five yearly intervals, can examine the sustainability and long-term impact of certain approaches or interventions. Research is also recommended on:

- Empowerment of women through emergencies – is it sustainable?
- Intra-household effects of participation (especially women's) in food/cash for work: how to balance participation/opportunity with over-burdening

- Changing livelihood patterns and how this affects vulnerability
- Social change through emergencies: effects on vulnerability and resilience of different groups in the community
- Emergency economy in different situations: who benefits, who suffers and how does aid affect this process
- Social effects of emergencies and long-term implications, e.g., early marriage as a coping strategy
- Recovery – who recovered and why? Who did not and why?

Delving into such issues will strengthen not only emergency-related interventions but also inform development programmes of the changing context in which they are working.

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# Summary of Country Programme Studies

The reports and case studies sent in by country programmes as part of the study are available in full as a separate volume. For background to the study findings, their main characteristics are summarised here.

## Summary of Core Studies

### Bangladesh

*Floods 1998 and 2000;* cyclone preparedness programme.

ActionAid Bangladesh works primarily through local partner organisations and this reflects much of the review learnings. Focus is on links to long term and rights issues (such as education and women's vulnerability), and capacity building of local institutions. The report stresses the difficulty of responding to 'root causes' within the local cultural context.

**Key issues:** gender; participation; vulnerability; working with partners; capacity building; coordination; empowerment; community preparedness; sustainability.

### Kenya

*Drought in Merti and floods in Busia*

Review of two emergency programmes as part of country review, both in ActionAid programme areas. In Merti, drought is recurrent and affects livelihood strategies for development, thus emergency response (food aid and some innovative livelihood support projects) is integral to the development programme. The study finds, however, that prevention and preparedness are not addressed to the full potential. In Busia, ActionAid worked with local institutions to address rights issues such as water management and legal support for vulnerable people, as well as supporting rescue and relief operations.

**Key issues:** participation; gender; pastoralist livelihoods; 'recovery plus'; sustainability; preparedness and prevention; rights; advocacy/influencing.

### Mozambique

*Floods in Maputo 2000 and Zambezia 2001*

Two programme learning reviews of flood responses close to ActionAid programme areas. In both cases DEC funds were used and ActionAid played a key role in DEC agency coordination which raised profile. In Maputo the relief response phased into rehabilitation support including re-housing and activities which supported development, e.g. HIV/Aids awareness.

**Key issues:** participation; capacity building (staff and partners); coordination; opportunities for development goals; emergency/development programme interface; targeting.

### Sierra Leone

*Micro-credit to wives of ex-combatants in Kenema 2001; relief distributions in Kambia and North Bombali after conflict, 1996*

Two projects chosen for analysis out of ten reviewed. Activities cover both programme areas and non-programme areas and include relief and livelihood recovery in a conflict environment. The micro-credit project demonstrates the usefulness of cash loans to support economic recovery, with both direct and indirect impact. The In both cases community participation is highlighted as key to successful programmes.

**Key issues:** conflict; gender; participation; working with partners; micro-credit; livelihood recovery; targeting; relief quality/standards.

### Uganda

*Varied emergency work in seven districts – conflict, drought, disease, floods.*

Review of emergencies work country-wide (seven districts). Extremely varied projects with a broad definition of 'emergencies', although a major focus on conflict, floods, epidemics and drought. Stresses links to livelihoods, education and long-term programming. Emergency projects have included relief and rehabilitation phases, with some innovative education work and a capacity building approach. The report highlights the need for increased community participation and greater emphasis on disaster preparedness; also long term opportunities as seen, for instance, in post-epidemic hygiene awareness work.

**Key issues:** long term conflict; displacement; education; policy influencing; capacity building; vulnerability; participation; gender; advocacy.

## Summary of Case Studies

### Burundi

*Using the Reflect approach to education as a recovery and peace-building tool*

**Key issues:** conflict/development interface; education in emergencies; participation; institution-building; gender; long term approach.

### Dominican Republic

*Relief and recovery support to Haitian immigrants after Cyclone Georges.*

**Key issues:** advocacy/influencing; reconstruction; prevention/mitigation; 'recovery plus'; rights-based approach; gender; participation; coordination.

### Ethiopia

*Micro-credit used as a response to drought in Dalocha.*

**Key issues:** targeting; participation; gender; credit v relief; emergency/development programme interface; livelihood support.

### Ghana

*Grain banks to respond to food shortages and support long term food security; prevention of meningitis epidemic.*

**Key issues:** preparedness/early warning; opportunity; participation; capacity building; empowerment; targeting; advocacy/influencing.

### Honduras

*Reconstruction of bridges after Hurricane Mitch to promote recovery of livelihoods and communications*

**Key issues:** participation; coordination; capacity building; 'recovery plus'; sustainability.

### India (Gujarat)

*Post-earthquake relief and recovery.*

**Key issues:** rights-based approach; targeting; partners; psycho-social; livelihood development; gender/generation; cash-for-work; advocacy/influencing.

### India (Orissa)

*Post-cyclone relief and recovery including food-for-work, cash-for-work, reconstruction, community institution-building*

**Key issues:** gender/generation; participation; targeting; transparency; working with partners; capacity building; sustainability; multiple strategies; psycho-social; internal coordination, 'recovery plus'.

### Malawi

*Integrated approach to emergencies; response to floods and drought.*

**Key issues:** long term approach to emergencies; opportunities for development programme from emergency response; emergency preparedness and risk mitigation; livelihood recovery and resilience; advocacy and influencing; capacity building.

### Somaliland

*Drought assessment in consultation with elders.*

**Key issues:** community participation in decision-making; situational assessment; relationship between development programme and emergency work.



Bangladesh



Ghana



Bangladesh



Bangladesh

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