

Independent Evaluation: The DEC Response to the Earthquake in Gujarat

January – October 2001

VOLUME ONE Executive Summary

Disasters  Emergency Committee

52 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 7HU
Tel: +44 20 7580 6550
Fax: +44 20 7580 2854
Website: <http://www.dec.org.uk>



Humanitarian Initiatives, UK
vauxt@aol.com

with
Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad
dmi@icenet.net

and
Mango, UK
ajacobs@mango.org.uk

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CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE

Executive Summary

VOLUME TWO

Full Evaluation Report

Map

Acronyms

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction**
 - 1.1 Earthquakes in India
 - 1.2 Social consequences
 - 1.3 The DEC Response
 - 1.4 Methodology of the evaluation
- 2 The affected area**
- 3 The Red Cross Code**
 - 1 The humanitarian imperative
 - 2 Aid without discrimination
 - 3 Religion and politics
 - 4 Freedom from external government influence
 - 5 Respect for culture and custom
 - 6 Building on local capacities
 - 7 Involving beneficiaries
 - 8 Reducing future vulnerabilities
 - 9 Accountability
 - 10 Respect for dignity in images
- 4 Conclusions**
- 5 Summary of learning points**

Appendices

Financial Summary
The Red Cross Code of Conduct
The Evaluation Team
Schedule and persons consulted
(outside DEC)
Terms of Reference
Bibliography

VOLUME THREE

Sector Reports

- 1 Public opinion research: methodology and findings**
Sarah Routley
- 2 Shelter Issues**
Kirtee Shah
- 3 Financial Management**
Alex Jacobs
- 4 Review of the Sphere Standards and Indicators**
Hugh Goyder

Executive summary

Tony Vaux, *Team Leader*

Introduction: The evaluation process

- 1 This evaluation results from a collaboration between eight specialists from three organisations based in India and the UK (for names and background see Appendix Four). The DEC requested the team to focus on targeting, shelter and financial management. The team proposed to use the Red Cross Code¹ as an accepted set of values against which the response could be measured, and a public opinion survey as a way to reflect the views of the affected people and gain insights into the process of targeting. This survey eventually covered 50 villages and interviews with over 2,300 people – far more than previously covered by the DEC² and a unique feature of this evaluation.
- 2 Each DEC agency in the field³ was asked to make its own self-assessment against Sphere Standards and the Red Cross Code. The evaluators aimed for a continuous and interactive process, feeding back comments and suggestions during the course of the evaluation. The report is based on three sets of visits in Gujarat and Delhi between March and October 2001.
- 3 In this evaluation we review the total response of the DEC rather than the performance of the individual members. Where requested to do so we have fed back comments to individual agencies verbally. This Executive Summary focuses on issues arising for the DEC. The Full Report assesses the general response against the ten principles of the Red Cross Code, bringing out issues and lessons for the practice of disaster response. There are four additional reports on specific sectors: public opinion research, shelter, financial management and Sphere Standards.

Overview

- 4 The people affected by the earthquake have received substantial and timely assistance. After the initial loss of life, very few further lives were lost through secondary effects such as disease, hunger, cold or thirst. Programmes are in progress to restore shelter and livelihoods to levels existing before the earthquake and in some cases with improvements. In terms of relief, the global response was a success. There was a considerable level of satisfaction expressed by those affected and little sign that dependency had been created.
- 5 The contribution of the international community, including the British Government and the DEC members, has been large compared with other disasters, but very small compared with the response of the Government of India (with support from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank). Respectively the contributions of British Government, DEC and Indian

1 Members of the DEC must be signatories to the Code. Its full name is 'The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes' see www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code The full text is printed as Appendix Two.

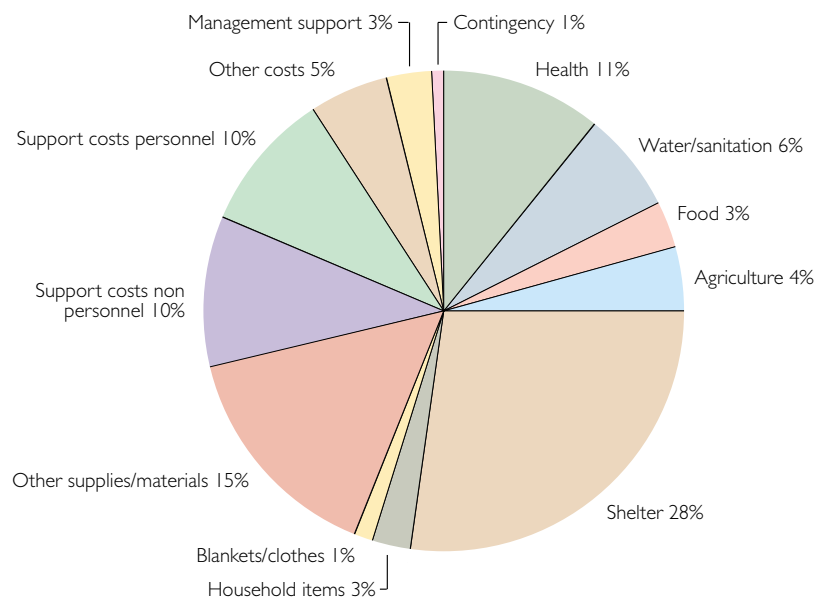
2 Compare 61 people interviewed in the Mozambique evaluation.

3 We distinguish between the UK-based DEC members and their representatives in India, referred to as agencies.

Government are £10m, £24m⁴ and over £1bn. This disparity became more important in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phases – and one that few DEC agencies sufficiently recognised.

- 6 Even in the relief phase far more people were rescued or assisted by neighbours, government staff and military personnel than by the high profile external search-and-rescue teams and aid agencies. The DEC's role was not in saving lives. DEC members have ameliorated the suffering and economic loss but could have achieved more impact, especially in the rehabilitation phase. In some cases they substituted for government responses and in others missed the opportunity to influence government by mobilising and representing the affected people.
- 7 DEC members could have developed more effective local partnerships and thereby achieved greater impact. Some members recognised this, while others struggled unnecessarily in the attempt to run their own programmes. More should have been done to increase local capacities and reduce future vulnerabilities as required under the Red Cross Code.

Use of DEC Funds: Programme and Support Activities
 DEC Gujarat Appeal, as at 31st October 2001



⁴ £19m through DEC and £5m through individual agencies.

PART ONE The response

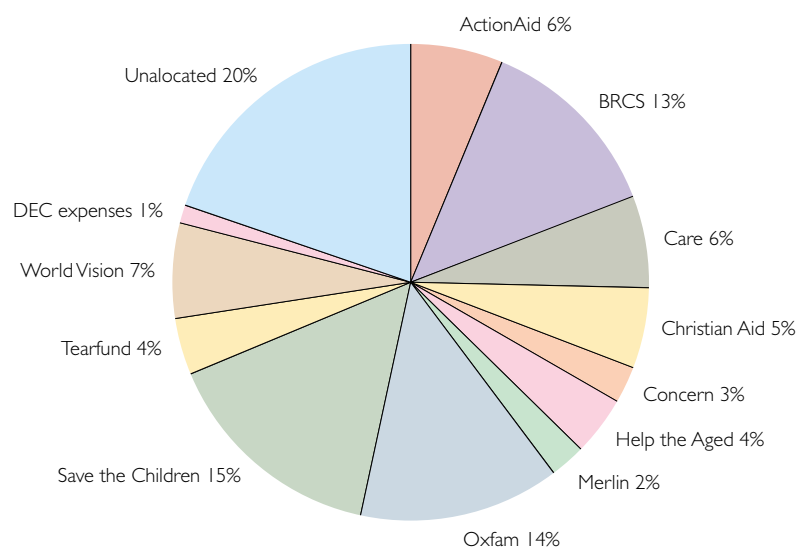
I.1 The relief phase

- 8 Overall the DEC response in the relief phase has been satisfactory, with a pre-eminent role for the Red Cross movement, and notably efficient work by Tearfund and World Vision. But overall, too many relief goods were imported, there were unnecessary relief flights and expatriates were employed where local staff and organizations would have been more effective and efficient. The short deployment periods of expatriate staff and their limited understanding of the area led to some mistakes in targeting.

I.2 Targeting

- 9 **Geographical spread.** In the initial rush of relief responses – local, national and international – there was considerable duplication both in assessment and distribution. Some agencies over-purchased relief materials and continued to distribute them long after they were required – and even after being requested to stop by government. DEC agencies neglected urban areas. Areas further from the epicentre, with less spectacular damage, received disproportionately less assistance, but Concern and Christian Aid among DEC agencies – and to some extent the British Red Cross Society – specifically addressed this issue.
- 10 **Social discrimination.** Our public opinion research reveals serious public concern about discrimination along lines of caste and to a lesser extent religion (exclusion of Moslems, bias to Christians) and gender (notably legal rights of widows). Some local NGOs are strongly linked to specific caste groups. Where DEC agencies were insufficiently aware of this, they could be ‘captured’. This resulted in aid being distributed according to caste, rather than need as required by the Red Cross Code.
- 11 **Gender.** Few examples exist of serious gender analysis or consultation with women by DEC agencies. Our public opinion survey indicates that women felt that they had often been excluded from discussions about the design of projects and that, where consulted, their views had been ignored. ActionAid was a notable exception in this respect.
- 12 **Age.** Positive work was done by HelpAge India not only to assist old people but also to draw the attention of other agencies and government to this issue.
- 13 **Disability.** Despite the fact that the earthquake caused an increase in numbers of disabled persons, DEC agencies have not given this issue any significant level of attention. There is a strong case for introducing the community-based rehabilitation approach, and because it is an area in which government lacks policy, a clear need for NGOs to do so.
- 14 **General.** Unless mediated by democratic processes and civil society there is an inevitable tendency for government inputs, especially in the heat of disasters, to benefit the better off rather than the most needy. There has been insufficient recognition of this problem. DEC agencies have done reasonably well in making their own response consistent with the Red Cross principle of non-discrimination but have generally ignored the wider picture. They could have played a much greater role as intermediaries, most notably in ensuring that compensation for destroyed houses was equitably distributed. As a result the overall effect of the disaster is likely to be that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.

Split of DEC funds between Member Agencies DEC Gujarat Earthquake Appeal, as at 31st October 2001



1.3 Rehabilitation

- 15 **General.** There were deficiencies in planning and strategy. Some agencies lingered for too long in relief while others rushed into ill-conceived reconstruction projects that gave limited scope for the affected people to exercise their own choices. Few agencies made a strategic review at the crucial point when turning from relief to rehabilitation.
- 16 The rehabilitation response has varied greatly between DEC agencies, and with widely differing levels of effectiveness. Bearing in mind the specific context of this disaster, the focus should have been more firmly on self-help housing, livelihoods, and advocacy - especially to prevent the exclusion of the most vulnerable people.
- 17 The DEC could have achieved more if agencies had engaged more effectively with local NGOs. Gujarat has a strong tradition of NGOs, yet several DEC members – even those with strong connections in the area – operated through their own staff and relied unnecessarily and inefficiently, on expatriates. In some cases local partners were ignored, and in others a climate of suspicion and distrust developed.
- 18 The failure to make best use of local partners was a primary cause of a mismatch that developed in the DEC between the large amount of funds available and the capacity of DEC agencies to scale up. In some cases the objective of disbursing funds took precedence over the assessment of need and opportunity. In that respect the response did not meet the first and fundamental requirement of the Red Cross Code that ‘The humanitarian imperative comes first’.
- 19 On the other hand a number of agencies assessed the situation accurately, drew on lessons from previous responses, and positioned themselves to maximize the effectiveness of funds donated by the British public. Among those that deserve special praise are ActionAid and Help the Aged. Save the Children (SCF) played an innovative role in temporary shelter. Significantly, all these successes were based on strong local partnerships. In the

rehabilitation phase it can be said that the stronger the local partnership⁵ the greater the impact. The key to success for DEC members was working with others (see 1.5 below).

- 20 **Livelihoods.** Typical activities in this field are provision of tools and training to artisans. The impact on sustainable livelihoods remains uncertain at this stage. More could have been done to address the transformation of traditional crafts that has become necessary because of the increasing effects of globalisation. Blacksmiths, block-printers and embroiderers are no longer supplying a captive local demand but competing in global markets. But the main issue is that the DEC could have done more in the livelihoods sector. The needs are enormous. Agencies should have interacted more closely with Government to ensure that its massive interventions in this sector benefit from their experience and do not duplicate what they have already done⁶. Nevertheless there was a great deal of good practice in the sector. CARE's work through local partners deserves particular credit.
- 21 **Water-harvesting.** Agencies have been forced into a trade off between speed and quality in relation to this issue. The problem was whether to build as many structures as possible or to ensure the greatest community mobilisation. The Red Cross and World Vision favoured speed, but their approach entailed mechanised solutions, use of contractors and low levels of community interaction. By contrast the approach of CARE's partners, although smaller in scale, has spread the benefits more widely through manual labour and led to a greater likelihood of long-term maintenance. But the number of projects is smaller. Using Red Cross Principles the latter approach has the greater merit –although it is not an easy choice. The real test will be to evaluate the impact in a few years' time.

1.4 Shelter and reconstruction

- 22 **Temporary Housing.** With the exception of SCF, CAFOD/Caritas and Christian Aid through their local partners, DEC members did not sufficiently address the urgent need for temporary housing and the huge potential for NGO involvement in that sector. Despite strong lessons from the Latur earthquake⁷ and prompting from the DEC Secretariat following the March monitoring visit, agencies decided to concentrate on permanent housing.
- 23 **Seismic safety.** Agencies found it difficult to balance the principle of seismic safety with respect for the owner's wishes and financial position. The added cost of seismic safety features is substantial. This makes it essential to obtain the full compensation package from government. Agencies underestimated the real costs of seismic safety and were too inclined to provide a few small inputs instead of tackling the underlying issue of government response by spread of information, group mobilisation and advocacy. Some owners, obliged by DEC donors to follow seismic safety but given inadequate resources to do so, will fall into debt. Others have rejected DEC agency inputs where they were considered disproportionate to the total costs.
- 24 **Construction training.** A main focus of DEC agencies has been on training masons. But without follow-up it remains uncertain whether such training makes any real difference to employment or implementation of seismic safety. If DEC agencies are involved in training they should monitor and assess the impact.

⁵ This includes national organizations representing DEC members.

⁶ State Government officials said that they had not received information from any private international agency.

⁷ Maharashtra, India in 1973.

25 Permanent Housing.

Drawing on the experience from the Latur earthquake of 1973, the Government rightly placed the emphasis on informal reconstruction by the owners rather than formal village plans and reconstruction by contractors. Over 95% of house reconstruction was left to the owners. DEC agencies disproportionately focused on a few cases of village 'adoption'. As in the case of the Latur earthquake, it has proved difficult to manage the competing demands for community participation, government approval and aid agency agendas.

26 In the view of our shelter consultant, the results in terms of new settlements have been poor, particularly in responsiveness to individual needs, and recognition of the essential functions of housing in relation to livelihoods. The process involves a skewing of DEC resources towards the tiny number⁸ of beneficiaries of these projects. It seems likely that many of these houses will not be used by the owners and may end up as 'second homes'⁹. This suggests a serious problem in relation to organisational learning.

27 **Employment.** A further criticism of these housing projects is that they generated a huge amount of employment but virtually none of it has gone to local people. Instead, contractors have brought in migrant labour. This problem should have been avoided from the start by insisting on the use of local labour (as SCF has done). The appalling conditions of migrant labourers are a human rights issue¹⁰ for which agencies involved in housing should take more responsibility.

28 **Public buildings.** DEC members (notably SCF, Merlin and British Red Cross) have allocated considerable sums to the reconstruction of pre-schools and health centres. The government would have rebuilt the centres anyway, although perhaps more slowly and to a lower standard (but probably at lower cost too).

29 In the case of SCF, the pre-school project is part of a long-term policy in India under which important work is being done to strengthen and improve the government's Integrated Child Development Services programme. From the perspective of 'the DEC donor' it might still seem questionable that funds were used in order to 'buy' influence in such a long-term programme rather than directly help the survivors of the earthquake. But the involvement may be justified under the Red Cross Code in terms of building long-term capacity and reducing future vulnerability. This is an example where more explicit use of the Code by the DEC would give the public a better idea of what they were contributing to.

30 Merlin has no intention of staying on in Gujarat, and has already handed over the buildings to government. Given their lack of experience in India and the expense of establishing offices for a short period it is questionable whether Merlin should have participated in the response. The best justification is that the buildings they have constructed are of a very high standard (but expensive). The British Red Cross input includes employment of social workers, but the evolution of a long-term programme in pre-schools will be limited by the capacity of the Gujarat Red Cross. With both Merlin and British Red Cross it is not easy to justify the substitution of DEC funds for government funding.

8 Currently estimated at 4.5% of the total.

9 Alternatives were available. The local NGOs Abhiyan, Navsarjan and Unnati (with support from DEC members) have supported owner-driven reconstruction by providing technical support, materials and help with getting government compensation.

10 Notably violations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- 31 More justifiable is support to community centres through Christian Aid's partner VHAJ. This was praised by people in our survey on the basis that the centres would not be provided by government and are seen to strengthen local capacity to deal with future disasters.
- 32 **Conclusion.** It should be a general principle of the DEC that funds should not substitute for government action unless there is clear justification in terms of longer-term involvements in capacity building and reduction of vulnerability.

1.5 Working with others

- 33 **Working with the people.** Our opinion survey reveals a disturbing level of dissatisfaction about consultation and transparency. In many cases people felt that they were only consulted about plans that had already been made. Similarly, participation was seen as a symbolic requirement to comply with agency policies.
- 34 **Working with local NGOs.** There has been much debate about the ability of local organisations to scale up. Despite strong views to the contrary by expatriate aid managers, the view of the evaluators is that the record of NGOs in Gujarat is outstanding and that the doubts and fears of DEC agencies have been much exaggerated by preconceptions brought from elsewhere. As a result of this, inputs to local NGOs were sometimes less than the scale of need required. Attempts to scale-up using expatriate staff have diverted attention and resources and more could have been done to increase the capacity of local NGOs. Crucial needs such as temporary housing and livelihood support have been under-funded. The possibility of insurance against the effect of future disasters through local organisations has been taken up only in a small way (by CARE). The root cause of this is probably that strategic decisions were taken without adequate understanding of India, and of Gujarat in particular.
- 35 **Working with government.** DEC members have stressed the difficult working context of Gujarat, notably the tribulations of working with government. They experienced long delays in the finalisation of plans for public buildings and confusion between different levels of government. While acknowledging that this made matters very difficult for DEC Programme Managers, it should also be recognised that this is a normal characteristic of working with government, especially in India where the checks and balances of a democratic (and bureaucratic) system do not allow foreign organisations to do exactly as they wish. In general the government worked much more effectively in Gujarat than in the Latur earthquake in Maharashtra. Much of the problem was generated by the DEC itself in the form of unrealistic timescales.

PART TWO: The functioning of the DEC

2.1 General accountability

- 36 The accountancy side of financial management has been generally good. Our local accountant examined the books of most member agencies in Gujarat and a representative sample of partners, and found overall a high standard. The DEC can be reasonably certain that funds raised in the UK can be tracked through to end-use. Oxfam GB was particularly good in this respect.
- 37 The problems arise at a more strategic level. DEC members did not all strike a proper balance between the availability of funds, their strategic role and their local capacities. Unable to match funds with capacity, the response of many of the DEC members became 'fund-driven' rather than 'need-driven'. Taking funds from many sources before proper plans had been drawn up, they became victims of their organisations' fundraising success. There was an uncritical acceptance that the more funding the better the result. Managers on the ground began to see their task as spending money within the DEC time-scale rather than planning good programmes. They held a meeting in Gujarat and questioned the DEC time-scale. But at the same time, some members (notably Help the Aged) needed more funds and many local NGOs felt that their capacity was not fully used. Overall, funds were not used as effectively as they might have been.

2.2 Changes in the funding context.

- 38 **DFID and ECHO.** DFID intervenes in the same disasters as the DEC and expects that a selected group of DEC members will act as its partners. The situation in Gujarat was exacerbated further by similar policies on the part of ECHO. As DFID insisted that the funds for the January earthquake must be used by the end of March, those members scarcely touched DEC funds during the relief phase. It seems reasonable to suggest that a member participating in an appeal should have an immediate need for funds, including funding for relief purposes.
- 39 There is an underlying problem that funds are skewed disproportionately towards situations of high media profile rather than actual need. The ideal solution would be for the DEC to persuade DFID and ECHO to retain their funds for situations with less media coverage where a public appeal has not taken place. If that is not realistic, the DEC should reconsider the way in which it allocates funds between members.

2.3 Allocation of funds within the DEC

- 40 The allocation of funds within the DEC agencies is determined by the Indicator of Capacity (IOC) mechanism. Each agency receives a percentage of the total Appeal funds based on a calculation of its global capacity. This mechanism is not adjusted for different disasters but in the Gujarat case there was an obvious mismatch between shares and capacity. Organisations with huge ongoing operations in India were quickly and efficiently able to launch substantial programmes in excess of the 'share' that had been laid down on a global scale.
- 41 In Gujarat the DEC's system of allocating funds between members would have caused even more serious problems if it had not been for the overall generosity of the public responding to the Appeal. There were enough funds to cover the DEC's inefficient internal allocations.
- 42 Despite being in the process of massive changes that greatly reduced its capacity to respond, Oxfam GB took the maximum funds from the DEC as well as from DFID and ECHO. By June it was evident that Oxfam could not spend the funds and over £2.6million -14% of the total income to the DEC and more than half of what Oxfam had requested- was returned. The evaluators have been unable to find any evidence that Oxfam weighed up the situation or considered its responsibility to the DEC as a whole. According to Oxfam's internal evaluation, it was simply assumed that Oxfam would take maximum funding.
- 43 Arguably, the funds that Oxfam held back during the relief phase could have been more efficiently used by other members. At least one DEC member (Help the Aged) was actively seeking more funds. The DEC system of allocating funds between members could have badly undermined the relief effort, leaving those in dire need without help. Luckily, in Gujarat the effect was reduced by the scale of donations. Next time the problem could be serious.
- 44 The point illustrates the fact that most DEC members pursue their own interests rather than those of the collective group, or the public donor. Staff of DEC members view the DEC as little more than a fundraising mechanism, and are wary of any attempt by the DEC to take on a wider role. The fear that the DEC might become a grant-making body is often used to prevent any progress towards collective action.
- 45 No-one outside a member agency really knows what its capacity for response is likely to be. The DEC Secretariat cannot impose its own judgments. Some members carefully consider their capacity and decide to take less than their full share, or in CAFOD's case not to participate at all. Others do not consider the issue at all. The solution should be to establish a common procedure. The Chief Executive should be empowered to question such decisions against the agreed framework (testing whether the full procedure has been followed – not questioning the judgments), and to report back to the Board on any cases where there is not full agreement.

11 Although the stated norm is 6 months with a maximum of 9 months, recent practice has been to declare a 9-month period from the start.

2.4 The DEC timescale

- 46 The DEC's nine-month timescale¹¹ has been a source of considerable frustration to managers and planners in the field. It is much longer than the relief phase but too short for most rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. In Gujarat, as in other recent emergencies, the problem has been covered over by allowing a nine-month 'closing down' period.
- 47 In Gujarat, some managers in DEC head offices suspected from the outset that there would be an 'extension' and planned accordingly. But for managers in the field uncertainty about the extension had a severe effect on programme planning and implementation. This caused severe inefficiencies. Levels of participation and consultation in house construction projects were adversely affected. Livelihood projects were curtailed.
- 48 Poor communications compounded the problem. Even after the Chief Executive's letter in June (sent to head offices but not found in many field offices) field managers remained uncertain about the situation as late as the October visit of the evaluation team. The message was not being passed on. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the process itself, the result was confusion in the field and haste to complete projects which really needed more time. As a result there was some loss of quality of projects in relation to Red Cross Code principles.
- 49 By allowing a further nine-month period for 'closing down' the Chief Executive found a formula which allowed members to spend DEC funds, but only by a necessary 'fudge'. Few outsiders would have expected 'closing down' to take as long as the actual operation, nor that the same amount of funds would be used for 'closing down' as for the rest of the response. The DEC had no choice, but the process has tended to penalise those managers who planned according to the stated rules at the outset and it has rewarded those who gambled on the likelihood of an extension (or used their influence to bring it about).
- 50 We suggest that the solution to these various problems is to have an 18-month period as the norm but specify that within that period members will be expected to use twice as much in the first half as in the second, so that the second part is more genuinely closing down and that immediate relief needs are likely to be met before other possibilities are considered. The Chief Executive should have the right to question significant variations to the agreed framework and proactively encourage transfers of funds between agencies in order to maximise overall efficiency. This could be done as a continuous process.
- 51 **Impact on strategy.** With all the uncertainties about timescales and funding levels, many agencies missed the crucial opportunity to re-orientate their strategy at the point of moving forward from relief to rehabilitation. In some agencies issues such as advocacy and social mobilisation were ignored simply because they would not lead to what had become, for some managers at least, an over-riding objective – spending the funds..
- 52 This was a self-inflicted problem. By making a more honest appraisal of capacity at the start, by better learning of lessons from the past, and by more openness to work constructively with others DEC members could have avoided these problems.
- 53 **DEC planning procedures.** This lack of strategy was compounded by problems arising from the DEC's internal procedures. The current requirement for a 6-month plan at the end of four weeks is unrealistic. It obliges aid managers to make decisions before they can make a strategic appraisal. Having drawn up the plan, the necessary strategic appraisal may seem irrelevant and does not take place. It causes a tendency for such plans to be drawn up in head offices, even by fundraisers, away from the field. Instead we suggest that plans are drawn up at the end of 6 weeks and that these plans must cover an agreed list of topics as part of a standardised DEC assessment process.

2.5 Information management

- 54 Information and Co-ordination. The forum of DEC agencies set up by Oxfam and SCF, and enthusiastically supported by SCF's Programme Manager, played an important and positive role in the exchange of information between DEC members and, on at least two occasions, as a channel through which issues could be mediated between field offices and head offices. Because other co-ordination mechanisms were not working effectively, SCF tried hard to assemble a collective database but by the time it began to work other databases had finally been established.
- 55 The process demonstrates a clear need for information management by the DEC during the relief phase of the emergency and particularly in the first weeks. In future we suggest that the DEC should send a liaison officer familiar with DEC rules and procedures to be present in the first weeks of a disaster up to the preparation of 6-week plans with a role focused on information management.
- 56 **DEC communications.** Communication from the DEC, especially about the issue of time-scales, should have been more comprehensive to give better guidance to field managers. There was some confusion among DEC members, and particularly staff on the ground, about the limits to the use of Appeal funds, especially in relation to livelihoods.

2.6 Other issues

- 57 **Use of the Red Cross Code.** All DEC members are signatories to the Code¹² but none used it actively during the emergency, and many field managers were unfamiliar with it. The Red Cross Code can be used effectively in evaluation as a measure of quality. In the full report we take each Principle in turn, focus on key issues (as far as possible those specified in the terms of reference) and then examine performance against the Principle. We are able to show which Principles require more attention and thus focus attention on learning. In this case the Principles relating to building local capacities and reducing future vulnerabilities were highlighted –with the proviso that some agencies were following the Code much more than others.
- 58 The Code could also be used in programme planning but in order to do so we suggest that the DEC should develop indicators for compliance with the Code. These could be particularly useful in relation to accountability/transparency and dignity (Principles Nine and Ten).
- 59 **Transparency.** One of the most challenging principles in the Code is the requirement to be accountable both to the people in need and to those who give funds. The DEC deserves much credit for its policy of publishing evaluations. It is also planned that the opinion survey will be published in English, Gujarati and Hindi. But we detected a tendency amongst some aid agency staff in the UK to regard public sympathy as a commodity to be exploited rather than a perception to be developed. Similarly in the field, DEC members (with the exception of ActionAid) did very little to make their activities and policies known in their areas of operation. DEC members can scarcely begin to be accountable if they are not transparent.

12 It is a condition of membership.

- 60 **Dignity.** The DEC has neglected its obligation under the Red Cross Code to emphasise the dignity of those it helps. The image of an old man with hands raised in supplication used in the original appeal and the ‘Thank-you’ parade in the Nick Ross follow-up film were not examples of best practice.
- 61 **Sphere Standards.** Despite many references to their use, there was confusion about the application of Sphere Standards and Indicators, and they were not used in a meaningful way in this emergency. This is not simply the view of the evaluators. DEC field managers also concluded that Sphere Indicators, in particular, have as yet been too focused on situations where there is little or no local capacity. Members should consider carefully whether Sphere Indicators should be formally limited to specific types of emergency, adapted to cover situations such as Gujarat, or issued with explicit cautionary qualifications. The evaluation found that Sphere Standards had not led to a satisfactory level of assessment. Members may wish to consider whether Sphere can be used to improve levels of assessment.

PART THREE: General conclusion

- 62 Measuring performance against the Red Cross Code we would assign the following scores (points out of ten) for the total DEC response, with the proviso that there were huge disparities between DEC members –

1	Humanitarian imperative comes first.	5
2	Aid is given regardless of race etc.	8
3	Religion and Politics	9
4	Independence from government policy	<i>not applicable</i>
5	Culture and Custom	6
6	Build on local capacities	5
7	Involve beneficiaries	4
8	Reduce future vulnerabilities	3
9	Accountable to beneficiaries	6
	Ditto to donors	8
10	Dignity in images	5
	Total	59

- 63 Dividing the total by ten (ten criteria) this gives an overall rating for the DEC response of 5.9 for this disaster. The figure could be used to compare with DEC responses to other disasters, or those of other agencies.

PART FOUR: Recommendations

DEC members should –

- Ensure that consultation with the affected people can be integrated into planning rather than follow afterwards.
- Review their assessment procedures to ensure that the wider context is considered and that assessment feeds into the process of strategic review.
- Ensure that major lessons from previous disasters cannot be ignored.
- Recognise that local partnerships are likely to be more effective than external interventions.
- Recognise that the key to scaling up is not internal expansion but finding ways to work effectively with others.
- Use the Red Cross Code as a quality standard in programme planning.
- Develop indicators of good practice in relation to Red Cross Code Principles.
- Develop policies and procedures around the issue of transparency.
- Recognise the rights of public donors to expect collective responsibility for the efficient use of funds, and to have their understanding deepened.

The DEC should –

- Establish a timescale for Appeals of 18 months divided into two 9-month phases in which twice as much would be spent in the first phase as in the second.
- Regard the IOC mechanism only as a starting point for a self-assessment process which will be signed-off by senior managers.
- Establish the rules for such a procedure and empower the Chief Executive to monitor the process against the rules.
- Develop an information management strategy, drawing on lessons from previous emergencies.
- Field a Liaison Officer at the outset of an Appeal with a brief for information management.
- Continue to encourage a forum of DEC agencies in the field, as happened in Gujarat.
- Develop a wide mailing list in each disaster to ensure that facts such as decisions, procedures and rules are communicated directly to all concerned including programme partners.
- Replace four-week plans with six-week plans and ensure that these are strategic by establishing an appropriate list of headings.
- Proactively use the Red Cross Code as a test of quality.
- Consider the implications of the Gujarat experience for Sphere.
- Pay more attention to images (Red Cross Code Principle Nine) and focus on this in a future evaluation.

PART FIVE: Main learning points.

Earthquakes

- Earthquakes do not necessarily disrupt communications and trade.
- The unpredictability of earthquakes means that there is no easy prescription for seismic safety.
- Permanent reconstruction takes longer than the time in which people can reasonably be expected to live in tents: temporary housing is an important and neglected sector.
- Like other disasters, earthquakes may tend to make the poor poorer unless corrective steps are taken.

Preparedness

- Preparedness was viewed by the affected people as being about partnerships and knowledge rather than stocks and skills.
- Partnerships with local NGOs are the best means for external aid agencies to scale up.
- Where such partnerships have been developed there will be an expectation that they will continue in time of disaster.

Response

- Evaluations will continue to question whether agencies allow the desire for publicity and existence of emergency stocks to outweigh humanitarian principles –and therefore agencies should take extra care in making decisions open to such an interpretation.
- Every aid agency should make a full strategic assessment within 3 months of a disaster.
- The strategy should be explicitly measured against the Red Cross Code but further indicators are required, notably in the case of unclear concepts such as accountability, transparency and dignity.
- Research should be used more widely to underpin strategy.
- The strategy must look at the wider picture and include an advocacy strategy.
- This is especially the case where the DEC response is relatively small in relation to the total response.

Building on local capacities.

- DEC members gave insufficient attention to the development of local capacity, especially of NGO partners.
- Livelihoods were emphasised in the public opinion research as the central focus for relief and rehabilitation.
- Shelter and livelihoods are closely inter-related.
- Employment in construction offers a significant opportunity to support local livelihoods.
- Migrant labour is likely to be exploited and may involve violations of rights.
- The input must be proportionate to the task. Insufficient help can undermine local capacities.