

Disaster Management in Conflict Situations – International Experience before and after the Asian Tsunami

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I. Introduction

Tsunami – potential for peace or exacerbation of conflict?

Within a few hours the tsunami claimed more than 280,000 lives and more than one million people are still displaced across the 12 affected countries. Due to the sheer scale of destruction, the extensive ‘mediatisation’, the reputed tourist locations and the novelty of the phenomenon for the larger public the disaster received huge public attention. It sparked prompt international response and led to an unprecedented worldwide mobilization of resources for humanitarian relief and recovery. Almost 5 Billion US Dollars had been pledged after three weeks. Furthermore, large amounts of funds were raised by private citizens and corporations.² Economic, political and social dynamics thus rapidly influenced the human catastrophe and amply demonstrated the complex nexus between aid, politics and conflict.

This became particularly obvious in the cases of Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia. Both had been affected by more than 20 years of internal violent conflict and received most of the aid. Initially many hoped that the disaster – albeit its tragic devastations – could be seen as a ‘blessing in disguise’ for these countries, providing new windows of opportunity for peace and reconciliation. Political analysts felt that the tsunami not only prevented the main conflict parties from returning to civil war, but also might allow them to resume peace talks on a new basis without losing face for compromising earlier held positions that had contributed to

a deadlock. These positive assessments and aspirations were additionally nurtured by thousands of spontaneous examples of solidarity within the conflict countries, where people of different ethnic and religious background assisted each other immediately regardless their positions held in the conflict (cf. Uyangoda 2005a, CPA 2005).

However, while the tragic event itself indeed triggered startling solidarity across the existing divides, the aid response was apparently not always able to build on these positive effects. At the moment it looks as if post-Tsunami politics and aid provided ground for a peace process in Aceh, whereas they furthered conflict dynamics in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, only one month after the tsunami, experts as well as the general public *already* polemically started to refer to the massive aid influx as the ‘second wave’ or ‘the tsunami after the tsunami’ (Korf 2005) and a big ‘humanitarian circus’ (Rieff 2005). Increasingly assessment reports and evaluations provide in-depth analysis of the politics of the Tsunami response and various shortcomings of the aid delivery in almost all the affected countries. This critique focuses especially on general fault lines in the work of aid agencies as well as the respective governments, i.e. lack of information and consultation of population, unethical competition, and lack of pro-poor resettlement strategies (cf. FM Review 2005, ILO 2005, Walker et al. 2005, OXFAM 2005).

Against this background many questions arise: What did we know of disaster management in conflict situations before the tsunami? In how far has this knowledge been helpful and could it be applied? What were

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2 Private and public donations from Germany alone amount to a total of more than one billion EURO.



the main lines of tension and where do the shortcomings in the aid response lie? What can we learn, and what can we recommend for disaster management in violent conflicts?

The following contribution will respond to these questions by specifically focusing on the Sri Lankan case. Having received high international attention and support for peace building and recovery before as well as after the tsunami but showing yet little progress in the peace process, it is argued that the experience in Sri Lanka generates particular insights and lessons on the limitations of the current concepts of disaster management in conflict situations.³

II. Disaster management in conflict situations

What did we know before the tsunami?

Aid – be it humanitarian emergency aid or long-term development assistance – is a vehicle for providing people with tangible as well as intangible resources. These resource transfers represent wealth and power and can therefore easily lead to tensions and conflicts in a society. To some extent, conflicts over access to decision-making power and redistribution of resources are an inevitable and indeed necessary corollary of any social change and work towards sustainable development. As such it is important to keep in mind that conflicts per se are not a problem. What matters is the

³ This contribution is partly based on a concept note the author has written together with Uwe Kievelitz on behalf of GTZ for the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (GTZ 2005).

way in which conflicts are addressed, managed and hopefully resolved. Care must be taken that they do not lead to destructive crises and escalations of violence affecting whole societies.

Do No Harm Approach

Particularly challenging and difficult is the situation in which international assistance is provided in countries already affected by civil war or other forms of violent conflicts. The ambivalent role of humanitarian aid in conflict situations was highlighted especially by Mary Anderson in her groundbreaking book “Do no Harm. How Aid can Support Peace – or War”:

When international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes part of that context and thus also of the conflict. Although aid agencies often seek to be neutral or nonpartisan toward the winners and losers of a war, the impact of the aid is not neutral regarding whether the conflict worsens or abates (Anderson 1999, 1).

After years of field research all over the world, Mary Anderson and the *Local Capacities for Peace Project* came to the conclusion that international aid had inadvertently contributed to the prolonging and exacerbation of some conflicts by feeding existing tensions and weakening interdependency between the conflicting groups. They listed numerous examples of possible negative impacts of aid on violent conflicts (refer to Box 1).⁴

On the basis of lessons learnt from negative examples as well as positive experiences, where aid delivery had been able to strengthen peaceful intergroup relationships, an analytical framework, the “Do No Harm Approach”, was developed. Its main objective is to support aid agencies to

- at least **do no harm**, i.e. to continuously monitor intended and unintended impacts and avoid contributing to instability and violence,
- at best **do some good**, i.e. identify dividers and connectors in society in order to consciously strengthen the connectors and support local capacities for peace effectively.

Box 1: Based on Anderson 1999 & 2000

Impacts of aid and resource transfer in conflicts

Misuse and substitution effects

(e.g. aid is stolen or frees available resources of conflicting parties for pursuit of warfare)

Distribution effects

(e.g. aid distribution matches/ overlaps not with all groups in conflict)

Market effects

(e.g. aid influx distorts the market by increasing wages, prices and profits not all people will gain from it)

Legitimization effects

(e.g. with whom aid is provided legitimizes and de-legitimizes stakeholders in the conflict)

Implicit ethical messages

(e.g. agencies that do not cooperate convey the “war- message”: you do not work with whom you disagree)

4 Since the mid 1990’s many experts highlighted the difficulties of working in conflict situations (eg. Bradbury 1995, Klingebiel 1996, 1999; Kumar 1997, Uvin 1999). The particular asset of Anderson’s work was to have provided a framework for projects on how to analyse and monitor their impacts.

Box 2: Based on Anderson 1999 & 2000

Connectors Capacities for Peace	Systems & Institutions	Dividers Capacities for War
market places, infrastructure, communication system etc.		armed groups, distribution of weapons, war propaganda etc.
resistance, support by individuals and civil groups/ movements etc.	Attitudes & Actions	torture, lawlessness, displacement etc.
shared religious values, love for children, right to education etc.	Values & Interests	different religious values, struggle for land, resources etc.
shared events and suffering: loss of children, natural disaster etc.	Experiences	traumatic events experienced by one group: exodus, program etc.
common cultural traditions and festivals etc.	Symbols and Occasions	flags, heroes' days, war songs by one group etc.

The identification of connectors and dividers is the crucial first step for any program designing as well as project management decisions. Anderson has identified five categories of potential peace and war capacities. Examples for each category are provided in Box 2. The decisions determining why a project does what, where, when, with whom and how will be taken on the basis of this analysis (see Box 3). The *Local Ca-*

pacities for Peace Project provides extensive guidelines and advice for each of these decisions and its particular *relevance* in conflict situations (cf. especially Anderson 2000). Altogether, the framework is to be understood as a dynamic learning cycle that requires continuous reappraisal and adjustment of the programme as the changing political and social environment may turn initial connectors into dividers.

Box 3: Adapted from Anderson 1999, 74

Do No Harm Framework		
Context of conflict		
Dividers	Aid Intervention	Connectors
Institutions	Why?	Institutions
Attitudes	Where?	Attitudes
Actors	What?	Actors
Values	When?	Values
Interests	With whom?	Interests
Symbols	By whom?	Symbols
Occasions	How?	Occasions
	Programming Decisions	

Application of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity before the tsunami

The critical review of humanitarian aid since the mid 1990s had a significant impact on many leading aid agencies. It also influenced the theoretical and programmatic discourse of the international development work. Under the keyword “conflict sensitivity” an *increasing* number of donors and implementing organizations started to reflect on their policies and approaches in complex emergencies and conflict situations.⁵ Consequently, they enhanced the development and implementation of

- Codes of conduct
- Checklists and principles for design and monitoring of conflict sensitive interventions
- Guidelines for conflict sensitive needs assessments and evaluations
- Methods and tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments (PCIA) before, during and after an intervention
- Workshops and trainings for staff, especially in Do No Harm and PCIA
- Strategies to mainstream conflict sensitivity as a cross cutting issue in country portfolios.

Hence, it can be summarized that the basic ideas of “do no harm” and “conflict sensitivity” have been successfully integrated on the national and international policy level as well as on the programmatic level of many implementing organizations. However, it also has to be emphasized that the continuous application of these policies and concepts in daily work and on the project level is still in its infancy. While the theoretical discussion on conflict impact assessments is for example growing tremendously, most organizations still *struggle* with an effective application of time consuming and complex methods and tools into their daily practice. The number of professional evaluations still remains limited (cf. Ropers 2002).

With regard to Sri Lanka it is noteworthy that many bilateral donor agencies and some of the larger international implementing organizations were already

present in the country before the tsunami. Contrary to Aceh/Indonesia where only very few organizations had access to the conflict zone, in Sri Lanka some aid *agencies* had substantial experience of working in the war affected areas of the North and East. Since the Cease Fire Agreement in February 2002, many organizations had made it their explicit mandate to contribute towards peace building and a conflict sensitive reconstruction. They knew the political context and climate generally well. Coordination mechanisms on the donor and on the operational level were in place.

Peace-building potentials and good practices of conflict sensitivity after the tsunami?

For more than three years Sri Lanka has been in a “no war – no peace” situation. The Cease Fire Agreement has created opportunities for transforming the military conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) into a political negotiation process for just peace among all three – Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim – communities. Since May 2003 the negotiations process is however in a deadlock and the Cease Fire Agreement has been increasingly undermined by political killings, violent incidents and a highly uneven peace dividend. Against this background, many peace-building experts as well as the donor community hoped that the tsunami aid would provide an opportunity for the stakeholders to enter in a new era of communication. The basis was supposed to be an agreement on a joint tsunami relief and rehabilitation mechanism between the Government and the LTTE. After it was finally signed in June 2005, a major *breakthrough* seemed to have been achieved. However, rejected by Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists as well as Muslim constituencies and not fully endorsed by the Constitutional Court, it has not yet been implemented. Many Tamils – including those who are highly critical of LTTE – perceive this as a proof that the Sinhalese majority will never accept any form of power sharing.

Looking at the role of the international aid it is important to highlight that the development of this agreement has been encouraged (if not pushed) by large parts of

⁵ Mehler/Ribeaux (GTZ 2000) provide a good overview of the respective international policy debate and the material as well as training already available by the end of the 1990s.

the bilateral and multilateral donor community. If and in how far the donor community played a positive, neutral or problematic role in this process is difficult to assess as of yet and needs further analysis.

With regard to conflict sensitivity it can be stressed that many stakeholders in Sri Lanka have insisted on conflict sensitivity from the first day after the tsunami. This in itself has definitely been an achievement in comparison to earlier crises in other countries. Some of the leading local NGOs as well as many bilateral donors and their implementing agencies engaged immediately in efforts to adopt conflict sensitive approaches and avoid past errors.

On the strategic level, bilateral donors developed for example guiding principles for conflict sensitive needs assessments to be jointly carried out by the government and multilateral agencies with consultation of the LTTE, who is in control of large parts of the North and East.

On the operational level, local civil society organizations published an annotation of the international code of conduct by the Red Cross and disseminated information about the conflict context. Local and international agencies conducted several Do No Harm Workshops in Colombo and in other affected regions especially addressing newly arrived International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and local NGOs (e.g. GTZ-PIP 2005). The great response to all these different initiatives has proved that most actors are generally of good intention and showed interest in applying a conflict sensitive approach. At times the international staff admitted very frankly their rather naïve arrival in Sri Lanka.

Looking at this rather positive summary of the engagement by the donor community and local as well as international agencies for peace and conflict sensitivity, one has of course difficulties to understand why and when things went wrong and who is to blame for it. Before coming to any conclusions, it seems therefore important to investigate the potential lines of tension and conflict with a view to “do no harm”.

III. Conflict lines impacting peace

A preliminary analysis of the tsunami aid in Sri Lanka

While it seems that the tsunami and the aid response with its complex web of actors provided space for conflict resolution, it obviously also contributed to more tension and conflict in the already highly fractured social fabric. Some of the old divides and tensions were exacerbated, new factions and cleavages evolved and opened up new risks, not only in the event of uneven distribution of aid. The following lines of tension and controversy had a special impact on peace in Sri Lanka, but many of them are also applicable in Thailand, India and Aceh/Indonesia.

‘Paternistic humanitarian impulse’ vs. rights based approach

Unfortunately, in most of the affected countries the ‘humanitarian impulse’ or ‘paternistic’ approach that already has been so heavily criticized in other crises areas (cf. Fischer 2004) prevailed,⁶ while key social issues such as the right to secure tenure, the right to property, non-discrimination etc. were violated (cf. Leckie 2005). At the same time, those dedicated to following a rights-based approach learned that it is extremely challenging to apply in a conflict context. In the East of Sri Lanka where re-settlements of the population due to war and power politics have been frequent and thousands of land disputes between different ethnic communities are still unresolved, it is problematic to properly adhere to rights of property for example. Any violation of a given or only perceived right to property is bound to exacerbate existing conflicts. This context was further aggravated by the fact that aside from state authorities, donor organizations and the LTTE, a large number of other, often new institutional actors got involved (local and international NGOs, as well as private persons, business corporations, and religious organizations). Hence, it was very difficult to set up and realize coherent policies and standards – a precondition for following a rights based approach.

⁶ Conference participants of India, Aceh and Thailand confirmed the lack of a rights based approach.

Civilian vs. military approaches to humanitarian crises

The role of the military in the context of post-tsunami reconstruction has two dimensions. The first concerns direct military operations. It seems that the casualties in the respective fighting forces of both antagonists have had an influence on the potential for escalation. As analysts suggested, “the military balance may have shifted in a manner that would have rendered an outbreak of war problematic.” (CPA 2005). The second dimension concerns the role of the military as an agent of humanitarian aid delivery. In the post-tsunami recovery, national and international military forces were involved in support of the victims and in physical rehabilitation efforts. This has obviously had repercussions with regard to a number of issues: while the immediate support by the army (as well as by the LTTE by the way) was often highly appreciated, it also led to problems with regard to exact responsibilities, perceptions of power, protection and human rights issues (cf. Hedman 2005). In the East of Sri Lanka, parts of the population felt insecure and accused the government of misusing the situation to increase their *military* presence in the region. It is against this background that the recently debated issue of cooperation between civilians and military in humanitarian and post-conflict development assistance has to be discussed (cf. Klingebiel/Roeder 2004).

State actors vs. political and militant non-state actors

The massive post-tsunami aid interventions seem to have a definite influence on the balance of power between major conflict actors. In Sri Lanka the government was at the edge of bankruptcy in December 2004. The tsunami aid pledges resulted in a significant rise of the Sri Lankan Rupee. High taxation of imported relief items and newly registered INGOs provide an important and welcomed income source for the Sri Lankan state. This as well as the sending of foreign military contingents by several countries for questionable aid operations⁷ seemed to strengthen the position of the Sri Lankan government financially and symbolically. Public disputes among the different Sri

Lankan stakeholders about travel destinations of high-ranking politicians from all over the world (such as Kofi Annan, George Bush and Bill Clinton) highlighted and reinforced such grievances because they were considered one-sided. Mutual accusations of uneven aid distribution serving only ones’ own constituencies and of misusing aid for military purposes became frequent (cf. Uyangoda 2005a, Frerks/Klem 2005).

Centralized vs. local governance

Many experts are of the opinion that the tsunami called for a decentralized coordination and implementation. What’s more, some experts suggested making use of the humanitarian emergency in testing decentralized or “federalist modes of government” for delivery of services (Faiia 2005), thus making use of decentralization as a conflict transformation tool (cf. Kievelitz/Schrottshammer 2005). But in Sri Lanka, both the government and the LTTE rather used the opportunity up to now to strengthen their centralized decision-making structures. With their tendency toward a ‘humanitarian intervention from above’ stance, they view the affected people as passive recipients of humanitarian assistance. This became obvious when the government as well as the LTTE decided, without consulting the affected communities, to ban rebuilding houses within a coastal buffer zone (Uyangoda 2005b, 2). Aware of centralizing tendencies and isolated from other tsunami-affected regions and their similar struggle with the centralized structures, local officials are reluctant to make decisions or take initiative on their own (cf. Shanmugaratnam 2005, Uyangoda 2005b). All this leaves the impression that the tsunami aid response has made the vision of regional development through devolved power and the necessary shift in the people’s mindset even harder to realize.

Civil society vs. state actors

In Sri Lanka, the above-mentioned conflict lines have also contributed to a further deepening of the cleavages between civil society organizations and state actors. This divide also has to be understood against the

7 When the foreign naval troupes arrived in Sri Lanka, rescue teams were not necessary anymore, dead bodies had been recovered (by the Sri Lankan Army, the LTTE, local NGOs and engaged citizens). The tasks assumed by foreign soldiers probably could have been tackled by Sri Lankan actors.

backdrop of individual politicians wanting to strengthen their power base in communities and a limited/pre-modern understanding of the role of civil society. In recent months the national extremist parties JVP and JHU launched a broad media campaign with hate speeches against civil society organizations promoting peace. Turning these organizations into scapegoats allows the extremist parties to contest the resumption of negotiations and to divert public attention from state failures to address the immediate needs of the tsunami-affected population (Uyangoda 2005b/c). In the longer term it remains to be seen whether the post-tsunami aid has helped or rather hindered the crucial development of a strong civil society in a conflict-ridden country.

International vs. local capacity

After the tsunami disaster local NGOs along with ordinary civilians were often the first ones to respond to the immediate needs of the affected communities. In the following weeks thousands of international experts undertook missions to the affected countries. Few were familiar with the local living conditions, the political and conflict context or national languages. An estimated 300 new INGOs established their presence in Sri Lanka during the first month. While they might all be of good intention, a number of them do not have long-standing prior experience in relief, rehabilitation and/or development work, let alone knowledge of 'do-no-harm-principles'. Altogether, the massive international influx caused not only a severe escalation of real estate prices and salaries, it also contributed to a highly problematic brain drain from local to international organizations, mushrooming of local organizations, unhealthy competition between all relief actors and other kinds of distortions on the local market. It is not surprising that this influx has been heavily criticized by many local experts and NGOs as detrimental to local ownership and the sustainability of relief and peace building efforts. How far the work of these actors unconsciously deepened existing cleavages or if at times they were or will be able to bridge existing gaps still remains to be assessed. The latter seems unlikely if severe competition and ignorance of international codes of conduct prevail. It rather seems to underscore the well-known implicit ethical message prevailing in any war that one does not have to respect or cooperate

with whom one disagrees (cf. Harris 2005a; Uyangoda 2005a/b; Rieff 2005).

Non-affected vs. affected communities

Defining whether or not an individual has been affected is always problematic. In a way all Sri Lankans are affected by the increasing cost of living, labor and other distortions of the market. While some individuals might be 'winners' (finding new jobs, increasing real estate prices etc.), the larger and poorer part of the community tends to be the 'loser' (cf. OXFAM 2005). Many might not have lost property, but relied on the work of those affected by the tsunami. In this context, the overlap of affected or non-affected communities within one ethnic group is particularly problematic. First research indicates that the delivery of boats and new infrastructure in the East did not address the interdependency of affected and non-affected communities and hence was perceived by some communities as a threat to their ethnic group and livelihood (cf. Harris 2005a). This deepens and reinforces various perceptions of discrimination and seems to 'justify' factional associations and aid delivery. Some donor agencies were to a certain extent able to have positive impact on this conflict line when commissioning their implementing agencies for long-term support in the whole district.

Refugees of natural disaster vs. refugees of war

According to UNHCR more than 480,000 persons are currently displaced by the tsunami in Sri Lanka and more than 345,000 persons are still displaced by conflict, some of them having been displaced several times and living for more than a decade in refugee camps. Initially Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of the tsunami have been accorded much higher financial support and food ratios than civil war IDPs have received so far. This is a great source of grievance bearing potential for violent conflicts. In the East of Sri Lanka, the comparison is particularly flagrant because these IDPs live close by and some have been affected by both tsunami and conflict. While the Sri Lankan government is generally aware that this unequal treatment of IDPs is unacceptable, it is especially the donor community which has addressed this line of potential conflict constructively by providing the same aid for all.

Faith/ethnic based vs. secular approaches of aid agencies

The potential role of religion as a “divider” in conflict-ridden societies might become more accentuated in the post-tsunami context. In Sri Lanka, there has been increasing animosity and even violent conflict between religious groups during the past two years, especially between Buddhist and Christian constituencies, the latter being accused of unethical conversions. ‘Forced conversions’ have been an issue used in particular by extremist parties in the parliament and government coalition to mobilize their electorate for their nationalist Buddhist agendas. This question is now being raised anew because of the relief aid offered by high numbers of international organizations affiliated to churches and Islamic as well as sectarian movements.

IV. First lessons learnt and recommendations

So far little systematic effort has been made to examine the broader relevance and impact of the aid response on the conflict dynamics in Sri Lanka. While the above is a first attempt to get a better overview, it is still too early to come to final conclusions and lessons learnt. It can also be assumed that an in-depth study on the different impacts on peace and conflict in Sri Lanka and Indonesia will provide further learning material. Nevertheless, the above analysis already indicated some obvious shortcomings and lessons for the further improvement of conflict sensitive disaster management in conflict situations.

1. Up-to date baseline information on the conflict situation

Country specific baseline information on conflict dynamics and peace potentials are a crucial prerequisite for humanitarian and development organizations in order to be conflict sensitive and able to contribute to peace building. There is an imminent need to come to more rapid, high quality, regular and coherent information and making it available to international organizations.

2. Mechanisms to enforce minimum standards of conflict sensitivity

The post-tsunami context has made it very obvious: codes of conduct and principles of peace and conflict sensitivity are nice to have but oppose other

interests of aid agencies. They may contravene the political agenda of a donor country, but also thwart the competitive struggle of implementing organizations for their financial survival and organizational sustainability. Hence the application of codes of conduct proves to be poor if not impossible. In Sri Lanka, the means used to achieve ones’ own goals were not always according to the guidelines; at times even immoral and illegal (cf. Harris 2005a). The implicit ethical messages of this behavior are highly problematic and seriously harm the credibility of the international humanitarian aid community. Frank exchange about these issues seems to be avoided. The question arises: which officially acknowledged and internationally adopted methods and mechanisms of enforcing minimum standards can be found (such as “blaming and shaming”)?

3. Donor harmonization in the context of weak and/or biased state regulation

Donor coordination for rapid emergency situations in conflict-ridden countries is a particularly urgent concern especially on a political and strategic level. The Sri Lankan experience has shown that a lack of regulation by the state – be it intended or *because* of insufficient capacity – hampers the process and may lead to additional lines of tension and friction. Documents on donor harmonization such as the Declaration of Paris (May 2005) do not seem to adequately address this issue or the difficulty of strengthening partner countries and their ownership in a conflict context where the state partner is one important stakeholder. An issue to be addressed is how humanitarian and development assistance can be harmonized worldwide in such complex emergencies, where the state is a biased actor and donors (or their respective governments) cannot and do not want to engage all in the same way with the conflicting parties. How can international agencies be more supportive on a political and policy level with regards to conflict transformation and peace building?

4. Private donations and the usefulness of donor instruments

The ‘world of donors’ is changing and faces new challenges. Private money results in large contributions by INGOs. This has had an impact on the

leverage of donor instruments such as benchmarking and conditionality and their usefulness will have to be reassessed. At the same time the donor community needs to address INGOs in a systematic manner. It might be important to intensify regular dialogue with and among INGOs (including those affiliated to religious movements) in the countries of origin as well as in the hosting countries. This could help to

- develop standards to be adhered to before INGOs collect funds and come into a country (e.g. resource persons who know the conflict context and have appropriate language skills)
- develop coherent and complementary approaches in conflict countries. For example continuous reassessment of the definition of affected persons is necessary. Narrow earmarking of funds has to be avoided in conflict contexts. Flexibility of funds to redress evolving imbalances among the stakeholders is crucial. Here donors appear to be more flexible than INGOs.

5. Limitations of Do No Harm and conflict sensitive approaches on the micro level

Implementing agencies that had a conflict transformation mandate before the disaster were to a certain extent able to address an uneven allocation of aid between War and Tsunami IDPs. They could also extend their aid to the larger community and whole districts. However, looking at the above-mentioned conflict lines, one can see that even an organization that applies the Do No Harm approach perfectly will have almost no possibilities with its work on the micro level to positively impact many of the conflict lines mentioned above. The approach addresses only to a limited extent the decision-making processes on the meso and not at all on the macro level. Peace and conflict sensitive approaches for these levels need to be developed and applied. The approaches should provide mechanisms to respond to the following questions:

- Distortions of the market are not only caused by competing INGOs paying inadequately high salaries etc. They are created by the total sum of uncoordinated actors. As the Sri Lankan case highlights very well the effects of international humanitarian assistance are contingent upon the attitudes and actions of others such as the recipient state which decides

who and how many INGOs can be registered etc. Who assesses the situation and can advise at an early stage for counter action if too many actors come in etc?

- Who assesses the macro effect of the aid response (e.g. what the conflicting partners are earning as tax income through the aid flux and if this money is used for military expenses?)
- Is there any way to better coordinate the pledging? What are possibilities for donors to withdraw from earlier pledges in a coordinated manner and without losing face?

6. Public education

The expectations of the large public who have donated private and public money for a fast and smooth recovery of the tragic event are *understandably* high. At the same time the public knowledge about adequate relief and reconstruction processes and the political environment is rather limited. If the process appears to be slow and progress hardly visible, the frustration might be great, impacting future preparedness to provide donations. Hence, the pressure on all organizations to present visible results was and still is tremendous. With many actors in the field all organizations – including those committed to conflict sensitivity – quickly got caught in a vicious cycle of competition for high profile or prestigious projects. To a certain extent this could be avoided if donor countries engage on a broad base in public education in their own countries in order to

- Inform the public about the conflict context and the political environment in which (humanitarian) aid will be provided
- Provide criteria for the public to choose suitable implementing agencies (e.g. with country and disaster management experience)
- Sensitize the public to ground principles of professional development cooperation (e.g. participatory approach). The understanding of development work as a charity approach that can be handled by anybody tends to ‘victimize’ the affected community. This is particularly important when local communities and entities engage in North-South partnership initiatives.
- Accept that money donated could be extended to other crisis situations if it is not needed. Here of course transparency for the public is necessary.

With regards to the improvement of coordination mechanisms among the increasing number of actors in disaster management and the further development of the Do No Harm approach on the meso and macro level, there seems no doubt that the existing coordination bodies of the international donor community have a great responsibility and an important role to play. Some of the other recommendations should how-

ever also be taken up by other actors. The first and the last recommendations require a profound understanding of the political context in the respective conflict countries. Political foundations such as the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung might be well positioned to support this task. A close cooperation with the respective Embassies and selected development organizations could be envisaged as well.

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