

# ODA-FINANCED RELIEF & REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES IN BANGLADESH FOLLOWING THE CYCLONE OF APRIL 1991

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## The Programmes

The ODA response to the devastating cyclone that hit the Bangladesh coast on 29 April 1991 was to finance both relief and rehabilitation programmes. A total of £11.5m was allocated: £6.5m for relief and £5m for rehabilitation. In the end, £10.2m (88% of funds) were spent, £4.26m on relief and £5.94m on rehabilitation.

The overall objectives of the relief programme were minimising further loss of life and reducing human suffering through the provision of emergency relief, including food, shelter, clothing and medicine.

The overall objectives of the rehabilitation programme were not stated by ODA, but were inferred by the evaluators to consist of supporting the rehabilitation of communities devastated by the cyclone, by rapidly responding to local needs.

An early decision was taken to channel assistance mainly through NGOs, rather than government, in view of their better record in delivering and targeting relief supplies effectively. Some money was also given to international organisations (UNDRO, EC, League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) and to the Ministry of Defence for deploying a Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel with helicopters to assist in the relief efforts.

## The Evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken in February 1993 by a team consisting of a socio-economist (also team leader), a civil engineer, and an institutions specialist, all from Britain; and a health specialist, civil engineer and economist from Bangladesh. The team was required to evaluate ODA's relief programme and review the on-going rehabilitation programme.

## Overall Conclusion & Success Rating

The ODA relief programme was judged to have been *successful* in terms of its objectives. It is estimated to have met the needs of about 8 percent of survivors in the

worst-affected areas numbering roughly 33,000 families or 200,000 individuals. The rehabilitation programme is still being implemented and mainly involves construction of multi-purpose cyclone shelters and houses. The rehabilitation projects may prove to be broadly successful, though there have been shortcomings in appraisal, monitoring and implementation. Insufficient account was taken of people's need for employment and income generation in the months after the disaster.

## The Main Findings

- The speed and effectiveness of ODA's relief programme was impressive, and more rapid than those of most other donors.
- Overall, the NGO programmes financed by ODA were successful in preventing starvation and reducing suffering in some of the worst-affected areas. Almost all people received relief supplies within a week and there were no significant shortages while the relief programme lasted.
- The decision to channel most of ODA's relief finance through large NGOs with proven records in disaster management was appropriate and resulted in rapid implementation of efficient and generally well-targeted relief programmes. The programmes of smaller NGOs were not as effective in targeting relief supplies to women and other vulnerable groups.
- It was difficult to assess the relative cost-effectiveness of different NGO programmes, although it is clear that there are wide differences in the unit costs of relief commodities charged to ODA and in transport and management overheads.
- The UK military intervention "Operation Manna" was an effective, if expensive, way of supplying government food and other provisions to off-shore islands and of ferrying relief workers. It would have been even more effective if the vessel had arrived earlier, during the survival relief phase.
- Rehabilitation projects financed by ODA were mainly longer-term (e.g. multi-purpose cyclone shelters, housing). Short-term employment and income generating projects, which were urgently needed in the six months following the relief phase, accounted for only a small part of the programme.
- For many rehabilitation projects the design stage gave insufficient attention to technical and social aspects. Thereafter, appraisal was inadequate and monitoring was not systematic. For all these reasons the impact of many rehabilitation projects is likely to be less than it would otherwise have been.

## Lessons

- NGOs in Bangladesh provide a generally effective relief delivery system and are likely to continue to do so.
- In the longer term, the Government of Bangladesh needs to develop its capacity to respond quickly and effectively at times of disaster.

- ODA and NGOs need to work together to improve the framework for, and quality of, the proposals and reports submitted by NGOs. Feedback is also required on actual impact and cost-effectiveness.
- Better understanding is needed of the coping strategies of people living in cyclone-prone areas in order to improve the design of relief and rehabilitation programmes.
- Restoring safe water supply from groundwater after a cyclone or similar disaster is the most important step towards averting a large-scale outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases. Water purification tablets do not have an important role and disinfecting with bleaching powder may not be effective.
- For maximum effectiveness in responding to sudden onset disasters, UK military resources, if they are to be used, need to be deployed quickly after the event. Given the time and cost of mobilisation, an early but informed decision needs to be taken on whether to deploy such resources.
- After the relief phase of a disaster, special attention needs to be given to short term employment and income generating activities.
- Where ODA is to be involved in rehabilitation, NGOs need guidance on ODA's strategy for the particular disaster and individual proposals need greater technical, social and economic appraisal and monitoring than took place in this case.