

**NUFFIELD
COUNCIL ^{ON}
BIOETHICS**

**After the Indian Ocean tsunami: a
review of community engagement
activities and initiatives**

May 2019

Summary

This review of community engagement initiatives undertaken in response to the 2004 'boxing day' tsunami identifies a wide range of programmes launched by organisations in affected communities.

However, importantly, the findings of this review make clear that community engagement is not something that was just 'done to' people affected by the 2004 tsunami; rather, it was something that communities *themselves* drove, initiated, and contributed to.

Benefits of community engagements identified in the literature include examples of how communities – and specific sections of those communities such as young people and women – have been empowered. In some cases, initiatives allowed participants to enjoy improved community cohesion and health benefits as a result of taking part in community engagement programmes.

However, findings on reported benefits of community engagement sit alongside a range of problems identified in assessments of post-tsunami initiatives. Issues highlighted in the literature include the underrepresentation of women and young people in some engagement endeavours; failures – in some cases – to take on board community views, context, and pre-existing structures; and the risks of contributing to 'engagement fatigue' amongst communities at the heart of engagement endeavours.

Background

- 1 The Indian Ocean tsunami – also referred to as the 'Boxing Day Tsunami' – occurred on 26 December 2004. The tsunami was caused by a 9.2 magnitude undersea earthquake which occurred off the coast of Sumatra island, Indonesia. The earthquake ruptured a 900-mile section of fault line, causing a tsunami with waves that were over 100-feet high. This tsunami affected 14 countries¹ in south east Asia, killed more than 230,000 people,² and left millions without homes or basic utilities.

Aims of this review

- 2 This rapid review provides an account of how communities were engaged after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, including examples of how communities themselves expressed their agency in developing and initiating their own response and

¹ The countries were: Indonesia, Sir Lanka, India, Thailand, Somalia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Seychelles, South Africa, Yemen, and Kenya. See: International Tsunami Information Center (2014) *Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004*, available at: http://itic.ioc-unesco.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=1136&Itemid=1373.

² The Atlantic (26 December 2014) *Ten years since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami*, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/12/ten-years-since-the-2004-indian-ocean-tsunami/100878/>.

engagement activities. The review takes a broad approach to include as wide a range of community engagement (CE) initiatives as possible to provide an overview of good practice examples of CE activities and initiatives, alongside insight into some of the challenges. Four questions are explored:

- [How did communities initiate, control, and participate in the response to the 2004 tsunami?](#)
 - [What did organisations and governments do in order to engage communities after the tsunami?](#)
 - [What community initiatives have been assessed as beneficial?](#)
 - [What problems arose in the engagement of communities and community members affected by the tsunami?](#)
- 3 The findings of this review will inform the Nuffield Council on Bioethics' project on [ethical issues associated with research in global health emergencies](#), which will be published in 2020. In addition to taking into consideration emergencies born out of infectious disease outbreaks (for example, Ebola), this project will also explore how health research can be carried out ethically in humanitarian disasters caused by events such as earthquakes, extreme weather events (e.g., hurricanes), humanmade accidents (e.g., nuclear disasters), war, and terrorism.

Review methods

- 4 Keywords relating to the event were identified and used to construct search terms that formed the basis for this rapid review. The search terms were entered into Google (in order to gather grey literature), and Google Scholar. Snowballing references identified by initial search results yielded further sources from academic journals and grey literature. Abstracts of search results were assessed for relevance and, where pertinent to the aim of this review, each result's own references were followed up. Grey literature – which comprises a large part of this review – was identified through Boolean searching via Google, in addition to papers already known to the author.
- 5 Searches are not restricted to engagement activities that took place during a particular time period after the tsunami: however, in most examples identified, activities took place within one-to-two years of the disaster occurring.

How did communities initiate, control, and participate in response to the 2004 tsunami?

- 6 This question focuses on how communities demonstrated a sense of agency through their initiation, control, and participation in engagement activities and programmes after the 2004 tsunami. The literature provides many examples of this type of community response, including examples of how communities have taken up the mantle of initiatives originally established by organisations or governments. The first part of this section provides an account of community-driven initiatives identified by the review, comprised predominantly of examples of the actions of young people (paragraphs [7-14](#)); the second part focuses on initiatives started by

organisations, but later taken up and controlled by communities (paragraphs [15-19](#)).

1) *Community-driven initiatives*

- 7 Examples of community driven-initiatives undertaken in the aftermath of the tsunami included a number of rich examples provided by UNICEF in a report on the participation of children and young people in emergencies.³ For example, in highlighting its work with young people in Thailand, UNICEF provides an account of the leadership and actions of one young person (Salinee Punnarungsee) and her family whose village was destroyed by the tsunami.

“She left school after the tsunami (though she now goes to non-formal education classes) to help her parents save money. She has joined the Duang Prateep puppet theatre and earns 200 baht (US\$5) a day performing shows in schools and helping to train teachers on how to make puppets and performances. Her father has organized 49 other families without access to permanent housing; he wrote a project proposal and received funding from the Swedish Government to buy land and create a community from scratch. Part of the project includes involving children in all decisions.”⁴

- 8 This project’s focus on the involvement of children in all decisions is, suggests Salinee, a result of child rights training from the Duang Prateep Foundation, which, she says ‘heavily influenced’ her father’s attitude towards the involvement of young people in organising and designing their new community. Future training and education were also advocated by other young people in Thailand after the tsunami:

“... children wanted to learn more about the natural environment, particularly because they saw links to their protection... In suggesting ways they could contribute to community restoration, children wanted to learn about mangrove conservation and natural resource management. They also wanted to learn other relevant skills, such as swimming. Education officials responded with local curricula that reflected their interests and concerns.”⁵

- 9 Children’s role in responding actively to the disaster is also summarised by UNICEF in relation to action taken in the Maldives.

“After the tsunami struck on 26 December 2004, a call went out in the Maldives – “Whoever can help, please come.” Each volunteer was given an age-appropriate task. Many adults stayed away. Many young people came forward. When a psychosocial counsellor was sent to concentrate on possible problems with young people, she couldn’t find anyone. “They were all working,” she said.”⁶

- 10 Young people from the Moken community in Thailand also created and managed a local radio station used to transmit news, music, and features. UNICEF report

³ UNICEF (2007) *The participation of children and young people in emergencies*, available at: http://UNICEFinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Adolescents/the_participation_of_children_and_young_people_in_emergencies.pdf.

⁴ *ibid.*, at Box 11.

⁵ *ibid.*, at page 16.

⁶ *ibid.*, at page 9.

that the initiative is “now regarded as a warning station to alert the community of any emergency.”⁷ Young people from this community also made other key contributions after the tsunami:

“Some enterprising young people set up small local businesses while others with second language skills took on roles of negotiating with outsiders on behalf of their community. These activities earned them respect from adults and thus gained them a place in community meetings. Where adults were also trained in children’s rights, young people were offered opportunities. In a tsunami-affected area of Thailand, for example, a teenage girl became the accountant for a community housing group.”⁸

- 11 UNICEF also report a range of other rich examples of how children themselves took control and drove recovery and response efforts after the tsunami. Key examples, including how young people initiated practical help, are provided below.

“After staying at home because he hurt too much, Sukmi, a 17-year-old [from Aceh] who lost his parents in the calamity, decided one day to get out of his house, of himself and his misery. He went to school and joined up with ten other members of their Youth Red Cross group. “We went directly to the sub district office to offer help,” he recalled. “We helped evacuate the injured and delivered medicine where it was needed.”⁹

“Apart from saving others, providing emotional support and helping find food and shelter, children also led group prayers and joined adults on guard duty.”¹⁰

“... children gathered and burned debris and cleaned toilets in displaced-persons’ camps and other communal areas. Some even helped pick up bodies and construct coffins. Not all children were comfortable handling the dead, and as one child noted during a workshop on participation in emergency situations, those who didn’t should not feel bad because there were many other demands that needed their hands. Such as in the Maldives, where Boy Scouts and Girl Guides swept away debris.”¹¹

- 12 A camp in Thailand which provided shelter for 850 families after the tsunami was managed by community members who organised committees to make decisions about running the camp. In an account of this community’s activities, it has been suggested that “this collective management system helped to prepare the survivors for the longer-term tasks of negotiating for secure land and rebuilding their communities and livelihoods.”¹²

- 13 In another example of community response driven by adults, it has been reported that women in disaster-affected communities in South East Asia “realised that simple acts, such as sharing stories of grief, caring for each other’s children and accompanying each other to the health post, were within their capacity and control,

⁷ *ibid.*, at page 24.

⁸ *ibid.*, at Box 11.

⁹ *ibid.*, at Box 13.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, at page 10.

¹¹ *ibid.*, at page 14. UNICEF report further that Boy Scouts’ and Girl Guides’ work also included keeping records of affected people who were staying in temporary shelters after the disaster.

¹² Archer D, and Boonyabanha S (2011) Seeing a disaster as an opportunity – harnessing the energy of disaster survivors for change *Environment and Urbanization* **23(2)**: 351-64.

and helped them to recover from the impact of the disaster as well as reducing vulnerability to secondary protection risks, such as depression and neglect of their children.” This observation was made in the context of women realising that their ability to help one another was not limited by, or dependent on, financial resources (or lack of them).¹³

- 14 Women’s strong leadership of post-tsunami community initiatives include the actions of a woman (Sivaperumal Manimekalai) based in the tsunami-affected Nagapattinam district of Sri Lanka. Despite the resistance of male members of her community, she set up a fish-vendors federation for female members of her community which, it is reported, “has saved over 50 million... and repaid loans worth millions, contradicting the post-tsunami climate in which communities were being showered with grants.”¹⁴

2) *Initiatives taken up by communities*

- 15 There are several examples of communities taking up and controlling initiatives set up in the first instance by organisations or governments. For example, Plan reports that, in Sri Lanka, medical interns from the Galle Medical College and UNICEF trained young people in psychosocial work. In clubs established for children and young people (CYP), child-to-child activities involved encouraging children affected by the tsunami to engage with those who had not been affected “to try to avoid isolating the victims of the disaster.”¹⁵

- 16 Views of CYP were also sought actively as part of a film produced by Save the Children (Sweden) where young people were encouraged to set out their recommendations for how their communities might be reconstructed, and how they wanted agencies to engage them in programme responses.¹⁶ CYP engagement also formed part of Plan’s post-tsunami work in Indonesia when designing and setting-up children’s centres. The accounts of participants in this programme include:

“At Plan’s kindergarten and daycare centre, we assisted in building schools. Some of us teach younger children every Monday–Saturday, clean and tidy up the places.”

“We were of course very depressed following the tsunami. We attended trauma counselling activities through tent schools and other recreational activities sponsored by international aid agencies. With the activities, we

¹³ Humanitarian Practice Network (2010) *Making space for community-based protection in the humanitarian protection landscape*, available at: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/making-space-for-community-based-protection-in-the-humanitarian-protection-landscape/>. This piece does not specify where exactly in South East Asia this observation was made.

¹⁴ UNISDR (2007) *Acting with common purpose: proceedings of the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction: Geneva, 5-7 June 2007*, available at: https://www.unisdr.org/files/1464_GPActingwithcommonpurpose.pdf.

¹⁵ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 28.

¹⁶ Save the Children (Sweden) (2008) *'Participation is a virtue that must be cultivated': an analysis of children's participation working methods and materials within Save the Children Sweden* (Stockholm: Save the Children (Sweden)).

thought that we could continue on living. We helped our parents with the daily chores so that our parents did not get stressed too long.”¹⁷

17 CYP-focused initiatives also include the establishment of children’s neighbourhood parliaments by the Voluntary Health Association of Kanyakumari (VAHK),¹⁸ as highlighted by Save the Children.¹⁹ VAHK established the parliaments based on a model of ‘convergent community action’ with the aim of organising children to help themselves, but also “to motivate the elders to address civic rights, community issues and personal problems and in the process get empowered.” Save the Children highlights the role that the parliaments played following the tsunami:

“In the post Tsunami scenario, neighbourhood parliaments worked not only as forums to provide relief, provide additional nutrition support and psychosocial care to children but also to get children to take charge of children’s rights. Children conducted their own participatory healing sessions in these communities using prepared modules of laughter therapy, game therapy, fun therapy and peer counselling. In addition, they did a child rights mapping and child rights specific Participatory Learning Action (PLA). Later, these groups continued and contributed to the community based child protection mechanisms, raising child protection issues through the village protection or watch-dog committees.”

18 Similarly, an example from UNICEF notes:

“In some areas, development agencies established children’s centres after the 2004 tsunami. These centres were intended to provide psychosocial support through sport and recreational activities. Older children took over the management and operation of some centres. And when they did, they changed some of the activities and identified issues to take up, such as the protection of children from cigarette smoke and smoking, which they realized was also a challenge for adults. Such opportunities for raising issues and taking action have been particularly important for children who wanted to contribute to community development and renewal.”²⁰

19 In the Maldives, the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) note the establishment of women’s development committees and parent-teacher associations, “as well as task-oriented community efforts that had persisted or grown into modest community-based organisation with names and structures.” However – as noted at paragraph [59](#) – the lack of recognition of these organisations might undermine their aims.²¹

¹⁷ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 24.

¹⁸ Voluntary Health Association of Kanyakumari (2019) *Homepage*, available at: <https://www.indiamart.com/voluntary-health-associatio/aboutus.html>.

¹⁹ Save the Children (2006) *Child rights perspective in response to natural disasters in South Asia: a retrospective study* (Kathmandu: Save the Children).

²⁰ UNICEF (2007) *The participation of children and young people in emergencies*, available at: http://UNICEFinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Adolescents/the_participation_of_children_and_young_people_in_emergencies.pdf, at page 18.

²¹ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a4ff43a5202d468c9d3eb2a9dc547661/impact-of-the-tsunami-response-on-local-and-national-capacities_3142.pdf.

What did organisations do to engage communities after the tsunami?

20 This section focuses on the direct action of organisations to engage communities after the tsunami. A range of programmes, initiatives, and activities are highlighted which fall broadly within categories of those aimed at entire communities; those that focused on women; and those which engaged CYP.

1) *Initiatives aimed at entire communities affected by the tsunami*

21 Some organisations focused their community engagement activities at entire communities affected by the tsunami. TEC, for example, highlights the work of the Care Society in the Maldives which formed a partnership with 25 island community-based organisations in order to implement a joint tsunami response programme. TEC assesses that this “added to the momentum that led to the nation’s first Civil Society Conference and concluded with the drafting of a Civil Society Charter for the first time in the country’s history.”²²

22 Another project used art as a vehicle for CE, and offered community members living in a village in eastern Sri Lanka an opportunity to take part in an arts-based research workshop and evaluation as part of a research project. Participants were asked to present images of their most important needs, and their presentations were subsequently translated for international aid providers.²³

23 In its work in Sri Lanka, CARE Australia funded community information centres in response to its observation that community members in affected areas experienced “severe psychological impact” after the tsunami. According to CARE, these centres provided community members with a place to go “to discuss their problems and receive the necessary information to alleviate concerns.”²⁴ The same centres were also used to provide children with a place “to meet, play and relax in safety” (see paragraphs [27–30](#) for other examples of initiatives aimed at CYP).

24 Relatively few examples of the use of technologies to engage communities were identified by this review. However, one example is World Vision’s (WV) creation of a 3D animation to communicate with communities effectively.

“[The animation was] used to educate survivors about their rights, responsibilities and entitlements, whilst building social capacity and establishing community action groups. The latter is of utmost importance in tsunami shelter sites because many of the families that move into new homes are not part of the original community. They are reluctant to take ownership of the community’s shared problems and volunteer their support to a new community that they feel they have little in common with. Knowledge of rights

²² Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/f3e0fbc0f97c461c92a60f850a35dadb/joint-evaluation-of-the-international-response-to-the-indian-ocean-tsunami_3141.pdf.

²³ Huss E, Kaufman R, Avgar A *et al.* (2016) Arts as a vehicle for community building and post-disaster development *Disasters* **40(2)**: 284-303.

²⁴ Care Australia (2010) *Tsunami report*, available at: https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Tsunami-Report_2010_web-quality.pdf.

*and responsibilities of government, relief organizations and community is often limited.*²⁵

2) Initiatives aimed at women

25 CE initiatives aimed at women include examples set out in a report from Grantmakers without Borders which emphasises a series of lessons for grant-makers when responding to emergencies. One example highlights psychological support for women affected by the tsunami in Aceh.

*“In Indonesia, Komnas Perempuan, the National Commission on Violence Against Women, (AJWS grantee) launched a Healing House for women’s human rights activists suffering from tsunami-related trauma. Working with two local women’s groups in Takengoon (a mountainous region of Central Aceh), the Healing House seeks to holistically address psychological traumas and serve as a training center for grassroots groups and activists in order to sustain the critical work of women human rights activists as they rebuild their communities.”*²⁶

26 In Sri Lanka, a Canadian organisation – Sustainable Cities International (SCI) – launched a reconstruction project to ensure that women had a say in the reconstruction of their communities following the tsunami. One part of the project focused on the development of Women’s Community Resource Centres (CRCs). These, according to SCI, “have been designed through a participatory community design process to serve as women run and manage safe places for community members to organise, exchange information, receive / provide livelihood training and education, offer services and sustain women’s public participation”.

3) Initiatives aimed at children and young people

27 Examples of initiatives seeking to engage CYP after the tsunami included work by Save the Children to organise a three-day workshop with staff members and partners in southern India on ‘strengthening the participations of girls and boys in the tsunami response’.²⁷²⁸ In a report of the workshop, the organisation summarises:

“Experienced young people who had themselves been involved in relief and reconstruction efforts were engaged as resource persons during the workshop. During the proceedings there was an emphasis on integrating children’s views and perspectives into all stages of programme cycle management, as well as applying practice standards on children’s

²⁵ World Vision (2007) *Sri Lanka: tsunami recovery strengthened through community engagement tools*, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-tsunami-recovery-strengthened-through-community-engagement-tools>.

²⁶ Grantmakers Without Borders (2006) *The tsunami learning project: lessons for grantmakers in natural disaster response*, available at: http://www.internationaldonors.org/issues/pdf/tlp_full-report.pdf.

²⁷ Builders Without Borders (2016) *Sri Lanka - Community Resource Centre for Women*, available at: <https://builderswithoutborders.com/collections/previous-projects/products/sri-lanka-community-resource-centre-for-women-medical-clinic-construction>.

²⁸ Save the Children (Sweden) (2008) *A child participation bibliography: annotated bibliographies of child participation materials with Save the Children Sweden*, available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/1794/pdf/1794.pdf>.

participation to ensure consistent, high quality child participation practice. The importance of preparing and building the capacity of adults to involve girls and boys of different, ages and abilities – and to take their views seriously was highlighted.”

28 Also in India, UNICEF provide the following account of its work to involve CYP in the design and development of resource centres.

“This involved children observing, describing and analysing their communities through maps, focus groups and interviews. They defined the aims and functions of the proposed children’s resource centre. They also suggested designs that were presented to the broader community. Children’s participation continued into developing activities for the centres. The facilitating agencies observed that through this process, adults in the community began to view the children with respect.”²⁹

29 In Thailand, Save the Children worked with 25 schools in tsunami-affected areas to create a child-led disaster risk reduction programme. Save the Children conclude that the programme “empowered children and young people through a variety of activities, including the promotion of disaster preparedness in schools and communities. The programme has also given children confidence in assessing disaster risk in their communities, as well as the knowledge of what to do should a disaster occur.”³⁰ Also in Thailand, the Duang Prateep Foundation set up activity centres that provided CYP with a range of activities and resources such as crafts, sports, and toy libraries, in addition to providing mother and child care,³¹ and WV launched a youth-run radio station to promote community health and wellbeing.³²

30 In Sri Lanka, an art therapist worked with girls between the ages of five and 13 who were identified by their teachers as exhibiting acute symptoms of grief and trauma after the tsunami. The girls who took part were encouraged to draw and create images and then to talk about them to the facilitator, who observed that “all of the children wanted their images to be taken to the United States, feeling empowered by sharing their stories”. The research paper which sets out this art therapy project concludes that “through art therapy, the children were able to regain emotional control that was shattered with the tsunami and to commemorate their loss. Moreover, the small group setting provided witness to a collective grief, allowing children to voice their trauma with other survivors. Non-intrusive art tasks, such as ‘the day I will never forget’ encouraged the children to share their tsunami experiences only when ready.” In a further example from Sri Lanka, Plan carried out ‘action research’ with CYP and communities to determine the direction of its psychosocial support efforts. Plan summarises:

²⁹ UNICEF (2007) *The participation of children and young people in emergencies*, available at: http://UNICEFinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Adolescents/the_participation_of_children_and_young_people_in_emergencies.pdf, at box 21.

³⁰ Save the Children (Sweden) (2015) *Business and children’s participation: how businesses can create opportunities for children’s participation* (Stockholm: Save the Children (Sweden)), at page 66.

³¹ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 24.

³² World Vision (2009) *Raising resilience: the 2004 Asian tsunami: 5 years on*, available at: <https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/emergency-and-humanitarian-affairs/raising-resilience-the-2004-asian-tsunami-five-years-on.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

“The result was that was that many children and adults naturally coped with the initial shocks and their concerns were more centred on the future rather than the past. As a result, Plan focused on getting the lives of children and adults back to normal through the support of education, permanent housing and income-generation projects. At the same time, Plan chose to avoid short-term psychosocial activities that paralleled the government system. Instead, it supported teachers and counsellors in schools who provide children with continuous long-term support.”³³

What community initiatives have been assessed as beneficial?

31 This section explores the evidence base on why CE initiatives after the tsunami might be assessed as ‘beneficial’. Statements highlighting the general benefit enjoyed through CE after the tsunami include:

“Although it was not always easy to ensure community participation, in cases where participation was enforced, projects were more successful.”³⁴

“implementers are faced with the challenges of ensuring community ownership in order to sustain and ensure the quality of the programme.”³⁵

32 Specific categories of benefit identified are:

- [Community empowerment and agency](#)
- [Young people’s empowerment and agency](#)
- [Women’s empowerment](#)
- [Community cohesion](#)
- [Health benefits](#)

1) Community empowerment and agency

33 CE’s contribution to the empowerment and agency of communities was noted in several papers, including a general comment on the benefits arising out of engagement with communities after the tsunami by the Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee. The Committee suggested that the participation of people affected by the tsunami is a ‘virtuous loop’:

“Perhaps the most valuable benefit of promoting participation was something that, in the end, is not easily quantifiable: a feeling of individual empowerment,

³³ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 28.

³⁴ Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee (2009) *The tsunami legacy: innovation, breakthroughs and change*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/aprc-cpr-2009-tsunamilegacyreport.pdf>.

³⁵ UNISDR (2007) *Acting with common purpose: proceedings of the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction: Geneva, 5-7 June 2007*, available at: https://www.unisdr.org/files/1464_GPActingwithcommonpurpose.pdf. (Comments of representative of the Indian Government’s National Institute of Disaster Management.)

*of 'ownership' of community resources, and the unleashing of people's own capacities to cope.*³⁶

34 A further example of how CE contributed to community empowerment and agency was noted in an assessment of activities and community involvement in the Maldives. A representative of UNDP Maldives summarises:

*"For every single activity, we made sure that we had a local partner to work with, so in that way it was easier for us to communicate with the communities and mobilize them. At the same time, by engaging them in the tsunami recovery process, we are now seeing these organisations become stronger, and they are able to contribute to development activities. Now local bodies are approaching the donors on their own and mobilising funds."*³⁷

35 A 2009 UNICEF report indicates that its work with communities after the tsunami demonstrated "how linkages can be strengthened by engaging communities and non-governmental and community-based organizations in schools, children's centres, disaster preparedness planning and risk reduction exercises. In Sri Lanka, in particular, women's grassroots organizations were identified as potentially useful partners." Based on this positive assessment, UNICEF notes that in the future it should "positively discriminate in favour of grassroots and advocacy organizations as implementers and provide enabling and appropriate capacity assistance."³⁸

36 The opportunity to be 'kept busy' was observed to be a positive outcome of engaging communities after the tsunami. Some practical necessities – for example, clearing debris – have, it has been suggested, had a secondary effect in the form of psychological and emotional distraction, and part of a wider communal response: "a process of re-establishing social, cultural, and economic life following the devastation of the tsunami."³⁹ The same paper concluded, broadly, that "sharing experiences or feelings with others, as a kind of witnessing or collective consoling, was the most common response cited by participants in our study."

2) Young people's empowerment and agency

37 An important subset of community empowerment and agency is that experienced by CYP. This was highlighted as an important and standalone outcome of several initiatives undertaken after the tsunami. For example, the agency of CYP was

³⁶ Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee (2009) *The tsunami legacy: innovation, breakthroughs and change*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/aprc-cpr-2009-tsunamilegacyreport.pdf>.

³⁷ Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee (2009) *The tsunami legacy: innovation, breakthroughs and change*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/aprc-cpr-2009-tsunamilegacyreport.pdf>, at page 55.

³⁸ UNICEF (2009) *Children and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami: evaluation of UNICEF's response in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives (2005-2008)*, available at: https://www.UNICEF.org/evaldatabase/files/FINAL_Tsunami_Overall_Synthesis_29_March.pdf.

³⁹ Ekanayake S, Prince M, Sumathipala A *et al.* (2013) "We lost all we had in a second": coping with grief and loss after a natural disaster *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* **12(1)**: 69-75.

noted in a WV report of children giving positive feedback in response to an end-of-project study of tsunami-impacted communities in southern India.

“Children stated that involvement in WV children’s camps improved their confidence, communication skills and artistic skills. Activities the children remembered and liked included puppet shows, drama, singing, story telling, and a variety of sports. Children indicate that they would like to use their newly developed talents to help their communities develop. The camps also provided psychosocial support that was noted by other family members.”⁴⁰

38 A further example concerns an assessment of an after-school programme initiated after the tsunami in an affected area of Sri Lanka. The programme included a set of activities which encouraged participants to share their stories of how they coped after the tsunami. The assessment of the programme notes: “these sessions provided the opportunity for students to share their experiences, gain peer support, and identify strategies for coping with the aftermath of the tsunami as well as preparation for future natural disasters.”⁴¹

39 CYP’s participation after the tsunami was assessed as significantly beneficial in several respects by UNICEF. Their participation, states UNICEF, “not only developed their self-confidence and other skills but also increased their social and political awareness. Through their actions and the changed perceptions and reactions of adults, young people have taken on new roles within their family and community.”⁴²

40 Renewal of CYP’s cultural identity has also been highlighted as a benefit of community involvement after the tsunami: for example, by Thailand’s Moken community. It is suggested that this community’s knowledge that a tsunami would follow the earthquake – “due to the passing down of traditional wisdom” – led to community members valuing their heritage and language more:

“Following the 2004 tsunami, Moken children began to value their heritage more. When given the opportunity to participate in performance and community action, they wanted to tap into their cultural identity and express their heritage values more strongly and positively... Some of that new-found pride in and renewal of Moken identity came about through participation work that was intended to provide them psychosocial support, such as the theatre workshops.”⁴³

41 Commenting further on children from the Moken community, UNICEF also notes:

“Moken young people in Thailand have represented their community in discussions with outside agencies. When external developers wanted to take

⁴⁰ World Vision (2007) *End-of-project study of tsunami-impacted communities in southern India: final evaluation report*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/erd-3536-full.pdf>.

⁴¹ Nastasi BK, Jayasena A, Summerville M *et al.* (2011) Facilitating long-term recovery from natural disasters: psychosocial programming for tsunami-affected schools of Sri Lanka *School Psychology International* **32(5)**: 512-32, at page 520.

⁴² UNICEF (2007) *The participation of children and young people in emergencies*, available at: http://UNICEFinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Adolescents/the_participation_of_chi ldren_and_young_people_in_emergencies.pdf, at Box 29.

⁴³ *ibid.*, at Box 11.

Moken-owned property after the tsunami, young people took on an important role in the struggle against their land grabbing. Older girls involved themselves in that struggle and gained a degree of empowerment from it that they had not experienced before. The process also raised awareness of their ethnic heritage and traditions, and they have a renewed sense of identity and pride as well as self-confidence and self-esteem because of it.”⁴⁴

42 In a later WV report, the organisation concludes that, following their participation in its children’s camps, “children expressed clear positive ideas about their future, including professions they would like to enter; ways they want to care for their families; and how they would like their communities to develop.”⁴⁵

43 Benefits also include an opportunity to understand communities’ needs better. One study noted that teachers who – with support from researchers – ran an after-school programme designed to contribute to their students’ psychological wellbeing reported that the exercise improved their understanding of students’ lives, psychological well-being, and stressors.⁴⁶

3) Women’s empowerment

44 Women’s empowerment after the tsunami has also been observed as a benefit of CE initiatives. In an account from a representative of the Gandhian Unit for Integrated Development and Education (GUIDE) – an NGO based in Tamil Nadu, India – it was observed that “in the weeks following the tsunami, these women could barely speak in front of their husbands... But look at them now – they are sharing the same platform with their menfolk. And when they speak, the men listen.”⁴⁷

45 An account from WV also observes that in the initial response to the tsunami, “the majority of people, including community leaders and some NGO staff members, believed that any attempts to integrate women were unnecessary. They felt that it would be impossible to convince the communities to allow women to participate and, above all, international NGOs felt it was not their place to try and change the practices and beliefs within the local culture.” The WV account then notes, however, that “within several months, the scenario had significantly changed. Women actively participated in different stages of the humanitarian aid and recovery process. In many communities, women, despite their cultural limitations, took extremely active roles.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, at Box 29.

⁴⁵ World Vision (2009) *Raising resilience: the 2004 Asian tsunami: 5 years on*, available at: <https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/emergency-and-humanitarian-affairs/raising-resilience-the-2004-asian-tsunami-five-years-on.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

⁴⁶ Nastasi BK, Jayasena A, Summerville M *et al.* (2011) Facilitating long-term recovery from natural disasters: psychosocial programming for tsunami-affected schools of Sri Lanka *School Psychology International* **32(5)**: 512-32.

⁴⁷ Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee (2009) *The tsunami legacy: innovation, breakthroughs and change*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/aprc-cpr-2009-tsunamilegacyreport.pdf>, at page 49.

⁴⁸ The Brookings Institution (2008) *Moving beyond rhetoric: consultation and participation with populations displaced by conflict or natural disasters*, available at:

46 In a research focus group which took place nine months after the tsunami with affected community members in Tamil Nadu, positive effects of self-help groups were noted by participants. The authors highlight particularly that many women who took part in the focus groups indicated that “their self-help groups had given them a sense of respect, both within themselves, and within the community. They also stated that their opinions carried greater value.”⁴⁹

4) *Community cohesion*

47 CE after the tsunami has also been highlighted as an opportunity to share experiences with others who had lived through the disaster. In an account of survivors of the tsunami, it was noted that “various meetings organized by village level relief organizations were also identified as common opportunities to share experiences [...] Almost everyone in the study group talked about the significance of informal social resources such as interpersonal networks of family, friends, and neighbors in coping with the emotional and practical consequences of the tsunami.”⁵⁰

5) *Health benefits*

48 In some instances, health benefits were attributed to CE initiatives, including in the context of children’s health in a report by CARE Australia on its post-tsunami work in Indonesia. CARE notes the establishment of Community Feeding Centres to address child malnutrition after the tsunami and the support of the posyandu (village health post)⁵¹ “to promote safe motherhood skills through community education and identification of pregnant women for antenatal care”. After its intervention, CARE reported “a decrease in diseases and health problems such as malaria and diarrhoea in the years following the tsunami, as a result of increased awareness of health practices and improved access to, and quality of, health services.”⁵²

What problems arose in the engagement of communities and community members affected by the tsunami?

49 Several categories of problems and issues that arose in the engagement of communities were identified:

- [Gender and age disparities](#)
- [Failure to take on board community views and context](#)

<https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/10-internal-displacement.pdf>, at Appendix A.

⁴⁹ Rajkumar AP, Premkumar TS, and Tharyan P (2008) Coping with the Asian tsunami: perspectives from Tamil Nadu, India on the determinants of resilience in the face of adversity *Social Science & Medicine* **67(5)**: 844-53.

⁵⁰ Ekanayake S, Prince M, Sumathipala A *et al.* (2013) “We lost all we had in a second”: coping with grief and loss after a natural disaster *World Psychiatry: Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)* **12(1)**: 69-75.

⁵¹ For a brief overview of the role of Posyandu, see: WHO Regional Office for South East Asia (2019) *Implementation of an innovative Preconception Integrated Service Post "Posyandu" in Indonesia*, available at: <http://www.searo.who.int/entity/nutrition/success-stories/indonesia/en/>.

⁵² Care Australia (2010) *Tsunami report*, available at: https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Tsunami-Report_2010_web-quality.pdf.

- Engagement ‘fatigue’
- Time constraints and limitations
- Unmet expectations
- Feeding back to communities
- Undermining pre-existing structures
- Operating in conflict-affected areas

1) *Gender and age disparities*

50 Gender and age disparities in participation in community engagement initiatives were highlighted by several sources. For example, one report notes that adolescent girls indicated that they had not been included to the same extent as other CYP.

“Only boys or smaller children went to the events organised by agencies. Older girls did not go for these games. There were no programmes especially organised for them. Yours (children’s consultation) is the first time that we girls have attended.” From Ampara, Sri Lanka (13-17 years old)⁵³

51 Save the Children indicated that the response to natural disasters tends to lack CYP participation – particularly in situation assessments and programme interventions for relief response – and that consequently the needs of CYP are overlooked.⁵⁴ Relatedly, Plan observe that in countries directly affected by the tsunami, participatory activities “were mostly games, which only some children enjoyed.”⁵⁵ In the same report, Plan also notes that in several of the countries affected by the tsunami, “there is no tradition of consulting children; it is assumed that adults know what is best for them.” As an example of this attitude, the report suggests that “both in Thailand and in India there was a tendency to see child participation as entertainment only, and to organise fun activities. There was a reluctance to arrange psychosocial interventions to help children accept the deaths of their relatives.”

52 Plan also suggests that adults’ fears for the potential for CYP to be converted to religions other than their own impacted negatively on their involvement in participatory activities.⁵⁶ Plan sought the views of representatives of agencies that responded to the tsunami in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand to ask them how they engaged with CYP, and made the following observation about their responses:

“[The responses] implied a strong resistance to treating the needs of children separately. In particular, the right of child participation was not recognised, nor understood. As an interviewee from one of the biggest donor agencies in Asia put it, “We’re not dealing with those little things [involving children in their programme planning].”⁵⁷

⁵³ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 14.

⁵⁴ Save the Children (Sweden) (2008) *‘Participation is a virtue that must be cultivated’: an analysis of children’s participation working methods and materials within Save the Children Sweden* (Stockholm: Save the Children (Sweden)).

⁵⁵ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 14.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, at page 14.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, at page 6.

- 53 A study which took place in Aceh after the tsunami included the testimony of a regional UN official who observed: “No one is assessing the needs of young people and no one is considering how to provide them input into the planning phase and involvement in the recovery process.” The same study reported on the outcomes of focus groups with young people, concluding that there was a lack of assessment of their needs, and that their input on recovery processes had not been facilitated.⁵⁸
- 54 The temporal challenges of engaging children in the aftermath of the disaster were observed by a later report from Save the Children (Sweden) which notes that “initially it was felt there was no time to consider children’s opinions as it was an emergency.”⁵⁹ Similar findings were reported by Save the Children, who noted that “the emergency situation and the need for rescue were often stated as reasons for neither adult nor children’s participation.”⁶⁰
- 55 On gender disparities, CARE Australia sought to establish community groups in India after the tsunami, but notes that, “initially, it was difficult to engage communities, particularly men, to take part in communities and self-help groups due to their lack of knowledge of how such groups worked.” CARE states, however, that to “include and educate communities”, it promoted activities including establishing neighbourhood networks to “support ongoing sustainability and strengthen community resilience.”⁶¹
- 56 While the inclusion of women in CE initiatives was reported positively in some reports (see paragraphs [44-46](#)), its limitations were highlighted by other sources. For example, a report from Aceh notes that “while every effort was made to engage women in the discussions during focus group discussions, they generally were relatively less outspoken.”⁶² In Aceh, it has also been suggested that the needs of older people were omitted from most initiatives or programmes after the tsunami.⁶³

2) Failure to take on board community views and context

- 57 Some reports indicated that CE exercises did not genuinely take on board the views of those whom they sought to engage. Referring to the perception that aid providers imposed their own solutions rather than following communities’ leads after the tsunami, an Oxfam report makes the following observation:

“The agenda, it appears, was being set by aid providers, and community members were being treated more as targets of aid programs rather than as

⁵⁸ Rosati MJ (2006) Effectively addressing the mid- and long-term needs of young people affected by the tsunami in Aceh: an on-site assessment *International Review of Psychiatry* **18(3)**: 265-9.

⁵⁹ Save the Children (Sweden) (2008) *‘Participation is a virtue that must be cultivated’: an analysis of children’s participation working methods and materials within Save the Children Sweden* (Stockholm: Save the Children (Sweden)).

⁶⁰ Save the Children (2006) *Child rights perspective in response to natural disasters in South Asia: a retrospective study* (Kathmandu: Save the Children).

⁶¹ Care Australia (2010) *Tsunami report*, available at: https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Tsunami-Report_2010_web-quality.pdf.

⁶² Help Age International (2006) *Older people in Aceh, Indonesia 18 months after the tsunami: issues and recommendations*, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/BDECA17695935D4FC12571D30030C76F-helpage-idn-22aug.pdf>.

⁶³ *ibid.*

guides and essential partners in the design, implementation, monitoring, or evaluation of those programs.”⁶⁴

58 In affected areas Sri Lanka, Plan highlights programmes supporting psychosocial activities for CYP established after the tsunami without apparent reference to existing programmes.

“One NGO interviewee in Sri Lanka referred to a “psychosocial industry” being developed and implemented by certain agencies, without really examining the needs of the affected communities. However, some community-based psychosocial support programmes that already existed in war-affected areas of Sri Lanka were satisfactorily adapted to the demands of men, women and children affected by the tsunami.”⁶⁵

59 A lack of enthusiasm for community participation by some agencies and organisations has also been observed: several “tacked on consultations as a programmatic afterthought, and did not approach it as a key component of the project’s success.”⁶⁶ TEC similarly note:

“Immediately after the tsunami, all this complex web of civil society was mobilised in the local response, but was not properly recognised by the international agencies. These circles of ‘capacities’ can be mobilised and built upon, and also include informal leaders. But if community groups are ignored then their capacity and potential may be undermined.”⁶⁷

60 An allied issue relates to the proximity of organisations to the communities they were aiming to engage. A report by the Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee makes the following assessment:

“Both CARE and World Vision, for example, put their field offices in the driver’s seat, reasoning that they would be best able to deal with the needs and demands of the tsunami affected people. Some other NGOs, on the other hand, found it more difficult to implement effective participation since many key decisions were being made back in their headquarters, rather than in the field.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Oxfam (2008) *Deepening community engagement*, available at: <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/oa3/files/deepening-community-engagement.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 25.

⁶⁶ Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee (2009) *The tsunami legacy: innovation, breakthroughs and change*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/aprc-cpr-2009-tsunamilegacyreport.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a4ff43a5202d468c9d3eb2a9dc547661/impact-of-the-tsunami-response-on-local-and-national-capacities_3142.pdf, pp31-2.

⁶⁸ Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project Steering Committee (2009) *The tsunami legacy: innovation, breakthroughs and change*, available at: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/aprc-cpr-2009-tsunamilegacyreport.pdf>.

3) Engagement 'fatigue'

- 61 Communities' experience of 'engagement fatigue' after the tsunami was highlighted by several papers. One paper suggests that "people who have lived through a disaster often feel 'over-consulted' and 'over-assessed' by humanitarian aid agencies and they might also feel frustrated if 'consultation' appears to have little impact on the distribution of relief aid."⁶⁹ Reports on engagement activities with adults and CYP also highlight participants' fatigue, and even boredom.

*"Whenever an NGO comes to the village, they want to form a committee. Now our village has so many committees, if we go to them all, we don't have any other time, even to cook."*⁷⁰

*"People very frequently asked children the same questions. These people were many and came from many organisations. We felt bored and did not want to answer. But for the school's sake, and fame, we had to answer." From Ban Kalim, Thailand (7-12 years old)*⁷¹

- 62 An associated point concerns the proliferation of aid 'crowding out' an efficient response to the tsunami. Plan notes the effect that having 'too many' humanitarian actors may have on meaningful community participation.

*"The more humanitarian actors there are, the harder it is for agencies to foster community participation as an integral part of their response. Thus more time is spent negotiating, sharing information and coordinating with other humanitarian actors rather than with the affected communities."*⁷²

- 63 TEC have also observed that "In Indonesia, some village leaders acknowledged that they felt overwhelmed by the multitude of new challenges, disputes and decisions to be made."⁷³ Engagement burnout was also noted by WV when it reported on its response work in Sri Lanka following the tsunami: "there were lots of meetings with other NGOs as well. Therefore, communities were fed up with meetings."⁷⁴

4) Time constraints and limitations

- 64 Time constraints were also highlighted as issues that beset CE initiatives. For example, a study which focused on social recovery and community rebuilding across five tsunami-affected local areas in Sri Lanka and southern India (Chennai),

⁶⁹ Nadarajah Y, and Mulligan M (2011) Building local responses to disaster: lessons from the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and India *India Quarterly* **67(4)**: 307-24.

⁷⁰ Oxfam (2008) *Deepening community engagement*, available at: <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/oa3/files/deepening-community-engagement.pdf>.

⁷¹ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), at page 11.

⁷² *ibid.*, at page 10.

⁷³ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a4ff43a5202d468c9d3eb2a9dc547661/impact-of-the-tsunami-response-on-local-and-national-capacities_3142.pdf.

⁷⁴ World Vision (2007) *World Vision Lanka tsunami response: humanitarian team lessons learned - perspectives from communities and staff*, available at: https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/wv-hat-fgd-analysis-report-final_0.pdf.

noted the negative impact of strict time limits on the withdrawal of aid from those areas. Community leaders at Sainthamaruthu – which the authors suggest was a key example of where relief and recovery operations ‘went wrong’ – highlighted the work of one international aid agency – GOAL (an Irish NGO) – which found a way “to work in and with the affected community.” However, despite this positive endorsement, “even GOAL stuck to its preconceived intention to wind up its relief and aid operations in Sainthamaruthu within two years of the disasters, when there were still around 600 families living in poorly constructed ‘temporary shelters’ with little or no prospect of a permanent new home.”⁷⁵

65 Time limitations have also been noted in relation to engaging CYP – notably that participation activities after the tsunami were in several instances ‘one-off’ events such as magic shows or games with no follow-up measures. The limited time given to these activities was noted in CYP’s responses as summarised in Plan’s 2005 report.

“Earlier, there were so many things for children. Some sort of entertainment, like magic shows every week. Now nothing much happens.”⁷⁶

66 However, the same report notes that in Indonesia, CYP involvement was undertaken more systematically. It cites the establishment of Aceh’s Children Congress by a local NGO, and the establishment of a Child Council in every subdistrict of Aceh. At a national level in Indonesia, the Government supported an annual conference of children organised by CYP themselves.⁷⁷

67 Time constraints are noted in a different context by Plan.

“Many of the agency staff interviewed considered participation as a separate activity or programme. While understandable, this reinforces both the sectoral approach and mystique of technical expertise necessary to making “participation” attainable. It is assumed that participation programmes require preparation, SMART4 objectives, targets, specially trained personnel, resources and a clear strategy. The lack of time available to follow these procedures is the basis on which some agencies say that mobilising people effectively in an emergency is impossible.”⁷⁸

68 Levels of community concern and sadness at the departure of NGOs after the tsunami might depend, to an extent, on the cohesion of community groups. WV, for example, note that in withdrawing from one affected area of Sri Lanka where there was strong community action group leadership, “participants understood that it was now their responsibility to manage their own issues.” However, in another site where CAGs were newer and did not hold the same strength, “communities continue to rely heavily on WV to solve their problems.” WV therefore suggest that additional support is required to increase the likelihood of the long-term viability of

⁷⁵ Nadarajah Y, and Mulligan M (2011) Building local responses to disaster: lessons from the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and India *India Quarterly* **67(4)**: 307-24.

⁷⁶ Plan (2005) *Children and the tsunami* (Bangkok: Plan), a page 27.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp27-8.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, at page 12.

CAGs.⁷⁹ A related point on ensuing dependency on organisations after CE ends was also noted by Oxfam:

“Now people have come to a situation worse than the tsunami. That is dependency,” says E. T. Sarath, who participated in a study on community well-being in Mawella, Sri Lanka, and who feels his neighbors are not ready to support themselves independently of aid providers. “Most of the NGOs are responsible for this situation.” In the tsunami response, it was not community consultation that was lacking so much as community ownership of programs.”⁸⁰

69 In a later report on its work in India after the tsunami, independent assessors of WV’s endeavours make the following observation:

“That World Vision remained in communities well beyond the relief phase allowed them to undertake important medium-term actions to accelerate the recovery process and ensure that communities came away from the tragedy stronger than they met it... The attention they paid to community consultation and articulation of needs at various points during the programme design was clearly reflected in the quality of the programming and the appreciation that was expressed by community members.”⁸¹

5) Unmet expectations

70 The literature also provides examples of where the unmet expectations of community members contributed negatively to engagement efforts. For example, a study based in Ampara, Sri Lanka, found that villagers, community leaders, and aid workers were highly critical of international NGOs, “despite their best efforts in difficult circumstances.” The authors suggest that one reason for this negative response might be because NGOs did not meet the expectations of their intended beneficiaries.⁸²

71 A related point raised in a TEC report considered community perceptions of response efforts, and concluded that there was “considerable dissatisfaction with the recognition and support given to local capacities.”⁸³ In responses to a survey of 1,000 tsunami-affected people in Aceh, 57% stated that they had never been consulted about their needs. However, TEC note that this result “may reflect a

⁷⁹ World Vision (2007) *World Vision Lanka tsunami response: humanitarian team lessons learned - perspectives from communities and staff*, available at: https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/wv-hat-fgd-analysis-report-final_0.pdf.

⁸⁰ Oxfam (2009) *Collaboration in crises: lessons in community participation from the Oxfam International tsunami research program*, available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/collaboration-crises-lessons-tsunami.pdf>.

⁸¹ World Vision (2009) *Raising resilience: the 2004 Asian tsunami: 5 years on*, available at: <https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/emergency-and-humanitarian-affairs/raising-resilience-the-2004-asian-tsunami-five-years-on.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

⁸² Lee ACK (2008) Local perspectives on humanitarian aid in Sri Lanka after the tsunami *Public Health* **122(12)**: 1410-7.

⁸³ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a4ff43a5202d468c9d3eb2a9dc547661/impact-of-the-tsunami-response-on-local-and-national-capacities_3142.pdf.

difference in perception between what local communities regard as ‘consultation’ and its meaning to international agencies.”

72 Ineffective CE might also contribute to wrong or inappropriate needs being met. For example, in Aceh, ineffective CE led to aid being awarded to pay for boats to be made that were not safe for fishermen to use in open seas.⁸⁴

6) *Feeding back to communities*

73 A further issue relates to information being ‘fed back’ to communities after CE activities. An evaluation by TEC notes that “Assessments were not shared with local communities or officials after completion. The lack of such feedback to communities was one of the factors in the gap between the international perception of needs and the perception by local communities and officials.”⁸⁵ Citing an earlier study, the TEC evaluation also observes:

“... it is becoming clear that community consultations, while extremely helpful, are not enough as a method of keeping communities informed. It is very easy for misunderstandings to occur when exchanges are purely verbal, especially when one party is an international working through a translator. Instances abound of communities feeling that they have been made promises that have not been fulfilled – whether or not the NGOs working with them consider that they have even made such promises.”⁸⁶

74 Further, in a study which addressed ‘lessons learned’ from an approach to local response following the tsunami in Sri Lanka and India, it is argued that “community engaged research also carries a responsibility to return research findings to the communities concerned.”⁸⁷

7) *Undermining pre-existing structures*

75 On the issues of the importance of pre-existing structures, a foreword by Bill Clinton to a report by TEC states: “Local structures are already in place and more often than not the ‘first responders’ to a crisis. The way the international community goes about providing relief and recovery assistance must actively strengthen, not undermine, these local actors.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Wolfensohn Center for Development (2008) *Post-tsunami aid effectiveness in Aceh: proliferation and coordination in reconstruction*, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/11_aceh_aid_masyrafah.pdf.

⁸⁵ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/f3e0fbc0f97c461c92a60f850a35daddb/joint-evaluation-of-the-international-response-to-the-indian-ocean-tsunami_3141.pdf.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, citing Wall I (2005) *Where’s my house? Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province* (New York: UNDP).

⁸⁷ Nadarajah Y, and Mulligan M (2011) Building local responses to disaster: lessons from the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and India *India Quarterly* **67(4)**: 307-24.

⁸⁸ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/f3e0fbc0f97c461c92a60f850a35daddb/joint-evaluation-of-the-international-response-to-the-indian-ocean-tsunami_3141.pdf.

76 TEC also highlights how pre-existing intracommunity issues might cause problems:

“The reaction within the community to traditional leaders and new forms of organisation may not always be positive. In the Maldives, for example, there were cases of strong opposition and rejection of island chiefs who are nominated by the central government. They were perceived to be discriminatory or corrupt.”⁸⁹

77 Noting the success of children’s participation in recovery efforts in the aftermath of the tsunami (see quotes after paragraph [11](#)), UNICEF assesses that “despite such effort in the early stages of the emergency response, children found themselves soon side-lined when troops and international aid agencies arrived and took control of the relief work. The lingering message: Children saw how the arrival of external agencies stifled local initiative.”⁹⁰

8) Operating in conflict-affected areas

78 Attempts to carry out CE in areas affected by the tsunami that are also the locations of conflict was also noted as a problem by the literature identified in this review. For example, TEC notes that effective engagement was made more difficult by ongoing civil conflict in areas of Sri Lanka and Indonesia. TEC observes that “in Indonesia, there was less overlap between conflict-affected and tsunami-affected populations than in Sri Lanka, where conflict hampered independent decision making at all levels in the many districts affected by both conflict and tsunami.”⁹¹

Concluding remarks

79 This review will contribute to the Nuffield Council’s report on research in global health emergencies, and particularly the report’s sections on community agency and community experience following natural disasters. The report will be published in early 2020.

⁸⁹ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a4ff43a5202d468c9d3eb2a9dc547661/impact-of-the-tsunami-response-on-local-and-national-capacities_3142.pdf, at page 32.

⁹⁰ UNICEF (2007) *The participation of children and young people in emergencies*, available at: http://UNICEFinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Adolescents/the_participation_of_children_and_young_people_in_emergencies.pdf, at page 10.

⁹¹ Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006) *Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities*, available at: https://www.sida.se/contentassets/a4ff43a5202d468c9d3eb2a9dc547661/impact-of-the-tsunami-response-on-local-and-national-capacities_3142.pdf.