International Federation
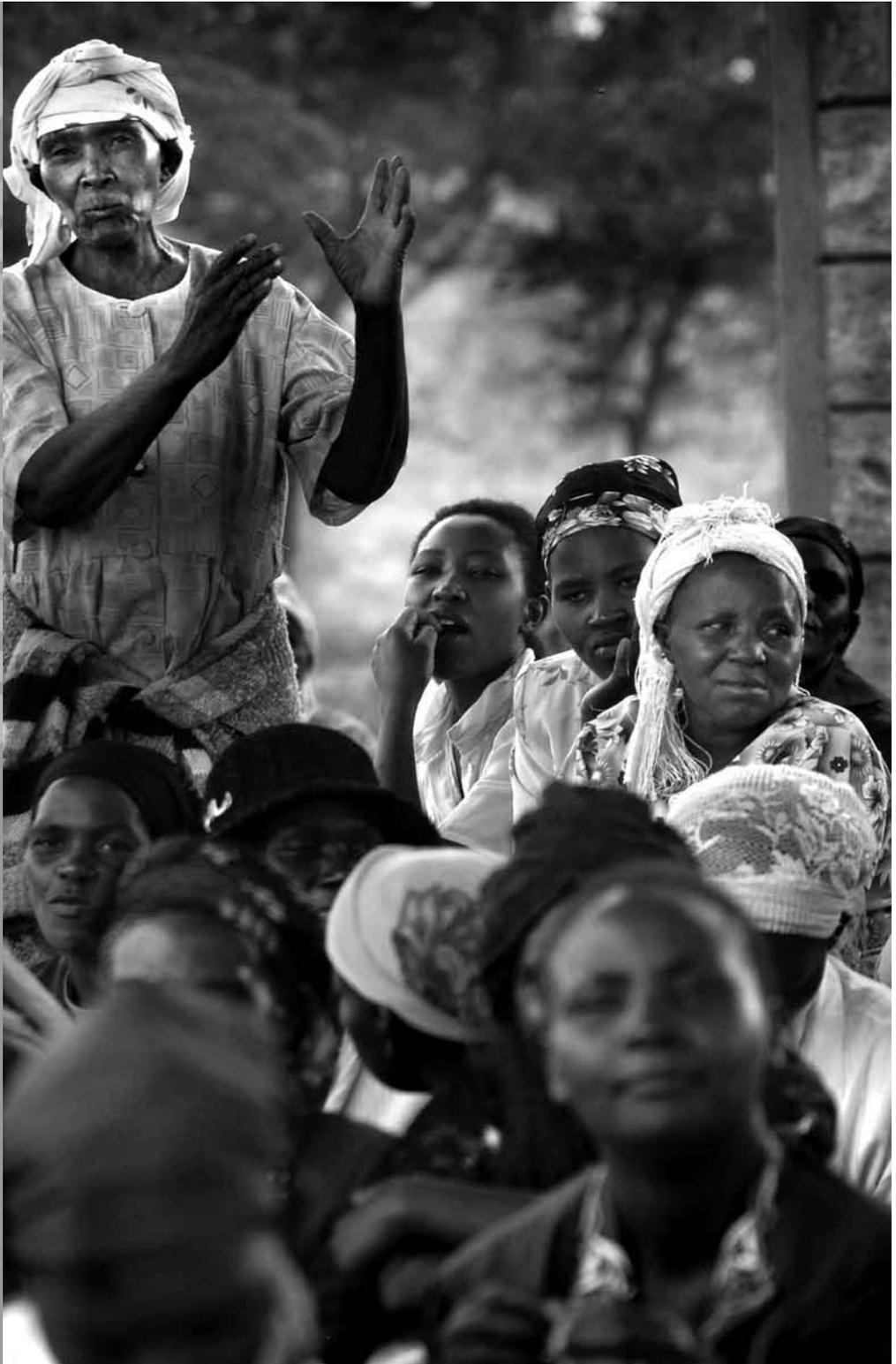of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

# Dealing with discrimination in disaster recovery

## Rationed exclusion

Lakshmi Sumathi is the mother of two children in the village of Panchalpuram in coastal Tamil Nadu, India. As with almost all of the other 55 village families, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami destroyed her home and most of her possessions. In an attempt to target support at the neediest, the Cuddalore district collector from the government of Tamil Nadu created a system of tsunami cards that included the name, age and address of holders. The cards served as proof of entitlement that allowed local and external humanitarian organizations to provide recovery support to the cardholders. Donors and relief distributors would consult the tsunami card and provide relief that was not listed on the card. Though this effort was apparently designed to better coordinate recovery assistance, the cards were "provided to supporters of the village leaders first", as Lakshmi explained. As a result, Lakshmi and other villagers became frustrated, feeling that the support intended to help them recover had been mishandled.

## Assistance based on need alone?

Non-discrimination is a central concept in several humanitarian system-wide agreements. The second principle of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* (the code of conduct) states that "aid is given regardless of the race, creed, or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone". The Sphere Project states that "humanitarian agencies have the responsibility to provide assistance in a manner that is consistent with human rights, including the right to participation, non-discrimination and information". Additionally, the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, as endorsed in 2003 by 17 donor governments and intergovernmental organizations, states that "humanitarian action should be guided by… impartiality… without discrimination between or within affected populations". Yet, too many humanitarian responses result in accusations by the media of discrimination, with project evaluations reporting on those who were left out of the relief effort.

This chapter provides examples of how to incorporate strategies for reducing discrimination into the disaster recovery process as a particular phase of the disaster management cycle, as this is the area in which the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) has greatest experience. It begins by demonstrating the absence of detailed practical assistance available for stakeholders involved in humanitarian

Photo opposite page: Women in the village of Ikaatini, Kenya, meet to discuss water facilities. As women are often responsible for collecting water, it is important that they are involved in deciding where the collection points are located.

Daniel Cima/ American Red Cross

response. Then it provides advice on detecting discrimination and integrating anti-discrimination into disaster recovery management. Based on recent experience in both large- and small-scale disasters, this chapter suggests four key strategies for reducing the negative impacts of discrimination. These include encouraging multi-stakeholder input, developing organizational anti-discrimination capacity, creating grievance-handling processes and supporting local capability to recover. Suggestions are given on how these can be integrated into the basic project cycle management phases of recovery; assessment, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

For this purpose, our focus moves from humanitarian agency headquarters and policy documents to the views and opinions of the field workers and the affected communities to gain a more operational perspective on what many of them have called dilemmas of discrimination. If various global agreements and system-wide standards are to achieve any added impact on the ground, then a better and deeper understanding of how discrimination is played out at an operational level – and what those field workers and affected community members suggest could be done – is important (see Box 6.1).

## Box 6.1 Community-based targeting

Much external aid is guided by the principle of targeting those most in need. Whether aid is getting to the right people is often the first question asked about humanitarian action, especially in situations where there is conflict and aid may be stolen. We know that the most exploited groups are worst hit by disasters, so does it not make sense to try to discriminate positively in favour of these groups? Accumulated evidence shows that, in some post-disaster circumstances, governments and aid agencies do a reasonable job of providing aid to these groups, but could do much better. Yet is 'positive discrimination' always a good idea, and what do we really know about targeting and discrimination? The following considers these questions in relation to food aid.

### Sharing versus targeting
Many societies, communities and households are organized around shared decision-making and shared resources. Cultural norms about sharing are bound to be influenced by the targeting of resources by outsiders after a disaster.

Targeting is by its nature discriminatory. Evidence from recent evaluations shows that the targeting of food aid to the most vulnerable is largely ineffective. Once food aid reaches the community, community leaders and members prefer to distribute it according to local cultural and social norms, and not only to the most vulnerable.

### Targeting may damage livelihoods
We know that most post-disaster relief is provided by affected populations, through individual and community livelihood strategies. We also know that external agencies struggle to understand these strategies and build aid around them. The implications of this mismatch between local and external practice

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are not well understood. What happens to food aid once it is distributed within a community, or even within a household? Redistribution of resources is an important livelihood strategy after disasters. We should not romanticize the culture of sharing or the benefits it brings to the marginalized, but we need to learn more about it.

Disrupting this culture of sharing may have a long-term negative impact on livelihoods. As such, the targeting of food aid may undermine rather than build on indigenous coping mechanisms and abilities to adapt to crisis. As a review conducted for Save the Children, *Community-Managed Targeting and Distribution of Food Aid*, notes: "The concern that excluding the traditionally better-off from the distribution may undermine long-term, intra-community support mechanisms has considerable merit, and should be investigated further."

### Community-based targeting: is it a solution?

Agencies are increasingly turning to community-based targeting (CBT) after disasters for a number of reasons: to promote participation and a fair system of distribution, to build interventions of local norms and culture, but also to justify cuts in food aid. CBT systems grew from programmes piloted by Oxfam in Uganda during the late 1980s. CBT was perceived as a way of incorporating developmental principles into relief. Today, CBT includes community-elected relief committees for food distribution and information on entitlements.

Most of the experience of CBT comes from eastern and southern Africa, Bangladesh and Myanmar. A growing body of evidence suggests that, given the right circumstances, CBT can positively discriminate towards the most vulnerable in a way that is acceptable to communities. For example, a 2005 World Food Programme review of targeting found that: "In the four case studies where CBTD [community-based targeting and distribution] were implemented [Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, and Myanmar], distribution problems involving powerful groups 'siphoning off food aid' were largely avoided. The inclusion and exclusion errors which did occur under CBTD programming were generally as a result of community consensus around perception of need in conjunction with scarcity of resources."

The study identified five key findings:

1. The level of resources provided should be appropriate to the context. CBT has failed if it is used to justify targeting criteria because of a decline in food aid.
2. Even with CBT, some degree of redistribution will usually take place, but it will be significantly less than with targeting.
3. So far, CBT has not worked during complex emergencies or in situations where there is intense political pressure on community leaders to favour certain groups.
4. CBT may work better during and after natural disasters where a relatively high proportion of the population is targeted.
5. Social targeting criteria may be easier to use in CBT than economic ones, which are more contentious. ■

# Paucity of detailed discrimination debate

The code of conduct and the Sphere Project have given strong mandates to assistance organizations and helped to establish system-wide standards for improving humanitarian action. In recent years, there has been additional work done to create

benchmarks for standards of accountability to beneficiaries. Benchmark 5 of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) 2007, which was launched to promote accountability to disaster survivors, states:

> "The agency shall establish and implement complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible and safe for intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, agency staff, humanitarian partners and other specified bodies."

To go beyond statements and actually to reduce discrimination in the field, during project operations, the providers of humanitarian recovery support could benefit from a greater awareness of what actually takes place in recovery operations, as well as more tools that guide their programmes on how to reduce discrimination. New tools such as *The Good Enough Guide* offer basic guidelines on how to be accountable to local people and how to measure impact based on experiences drawn from East Africa. Many other global initiatives focus on *what* should be done, but do not go any further to illustrate *how*.

Examples of inadequate attention to the *how* of discrimination in humanitarian response include the variety of tools or mechanisms that have been developed in recent years to support quality relief and early recovery. These tools represent major assets in reducing the risk to disasters and supporting sustainable recovery, but they do not offer enough guidance when a practitioner tries to use them to reduce discrimination in a humanitarian support project. Patterns and trends on different types of discrimination that result from humanitarian action – as well as who does it, and in what way – have yet to be identified and mapped out across humanitarian stakeholders, such as local institutions, governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

## Dilemmas for practitioners

We have to make choices based on hard realities that may result in discrimination. Sometimes, this takes the form of targeting poor or traditionally neglected individuals and families. Short-term differentiation – also known as affirmative action – is designed to correct long-term discrimination. For the purpose of this chapter, discrimination is taken to refer to improper differentiation. Fairness is a crucial point; in humanitarian action, fairness distinguishes differentiation from discrimination. Knowing that work is done in good faith, humanitarian personnel can benefit from considering who might or could have suffered because of their actions. Perhaps the key lies in being aware of what we do rather than just being aware of tools, systems and indicators.

Individuals are often torn between the need to meet different needs while responding. A lead member of the logistics team of an international medical NGO

working on the Thailand-Myanmar border with locally displaced tribal groups states: "We cannot stop responding because there is discrimination on the ground. We go ahead and then turn back to ensure that the initial, unintentional discrimination is corrected. For example, we provide for all those who ask for food in the first five distributions and, in the sixth, focus on those who seem to have received more than they should and search for those who are left out." But how long is soon enough? What happens to those who are discriminated against, and can such cases of neglect always be corrected? According to Khurshid Alam, a leading needs assessment consultant from Bangladesh: "Once discrimination occurs, it has its own chain of actions and reactions… almost always these are not correctable." Once boatless fishing labourers are left out of relief distributions or 'cash for work' (CFW) programmes for one or two months, it is very difficult to locate them on the coast as they move on in search of other opportunities. Similarly, once a family is excluded from a distribution list for temporary shelter assistance after an earthquake, it becomes much harder for them to secure permanent shelter.

Helping disaster-affected people tackle long-standing inequity can result in a clash of principles. According to Tony Vaux, an international consultant with experience in disasters and development: "The outsider has a responsibility to infuse the [recovery support] process with a focus on the poorest." The clash of principles, he says, may come as this focusing on the needs of the poor "may not necessarily be the way a community works".

These dilemmas are also found within the affected communities. Speaking in 2002, members of riot-affected communities in relief camps, which were set up after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, asked: "Why protest? Let some resources start coming to our village…What is new about this relief discrimination, we are always discriminated against, and this is one more time."

Access problems can often lead to whole communities being denied humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian community rarely makes sufficient effort to reach people that are very difficult to access. Cyclone Gafilo, which zigzagged across Madagascar in 2004, caused great destruction in the north-east of the country and heavy flooding across the island. Aid efforts focused mainly on the coastal towns in the north-east and south-west. A small team from the Malagasy Red Cross Society, together with a relief delegate from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, took a week to reach communities in the interior, travelling by truck over rough roads. "I will never forget the condition of whole villages when they came out to meet us, naked and living in abject poverty, whose situation was made so much worse by the floods," says Dian Mamadou, International Federation relief delegate. It was not until much later that the devastation of the vanilla crops was known and the inadequacy of recovery highlighted.

CHAPTER 6

# Detecting discrimination

Detecting and addressing discrimination is much easier when more time is spent with communities in project areas. This simple principle, as described by emergency and recovery project managers, is too often either overlooked or blatantly ignored by intervening organizations. In a report to the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) entitled *Social Vulnerability, Sustainable Livelihoods and Disasters*, Terry Cannon *et al* note that "agency staff's respect for local capacities [is a] far more important determinant of the developmental impact of relief projects than any other staff qualifications (including previous disaster relief experience)". Detecting discrimination can be reduced to filling in endless forms and writing reports. Often, a day-long, open and frank discussion on how the humanitarian response will support every affected individual's right to recover properly and how this should be promoted is more useful.

There are constraints to detecting discrimination: the need to cover many affected areas and the inability to spend significant time understanding the situation in each area are likely to lead to project managers being unable to recognize and address discrimination.

Agency mandates for employing local staff from affected areas do ensure a capacity to understand local issues. Well-established systems of transparency, such as maintaining detailed beneficiary records, are effective, organizational-level anti-discrimination measures.

The humanitarian system can make further progress towards detecting discrimination in communities and humanitarian responses. What will work is an organizational culture among large humanitarian organizations to encourage field staff to take their own initiative to achieve improved inclusion, by enabling free thinking and field-level decision-making. In reality, there are limits to humanitarian intervention: there is so much that is invisible to humanitarian agencies that are not part of the community.

# Integrating anti-discrimination measures into disaster recovery management

## Anti-discrimination strategies

Disasters and response bring opportunities for learning. Recent humanitarian system-wide efforts have made progress towards expanding understanding, gaining commitment, and improving the practice of humanitarian actors. These have included the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery and the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC). Among the recommendations made – such as

supporting local capacities to recover, supporting human rights and NGO professionalism and the role of needs assessments – actions have emerged from community-level experience and research on how discrimination may be reduced.

This chapter identifies four strategies that may be utilized by humanitarian actors to help prevent discrimination in recovery:
1. encouraging multi-stakeholder input
2. developing organizational anti-discrimination capacity
3. creating grievance-handling processes
4. supporting local capability to recover

A discussion of each is followed by details on how these can be implemented in the project phases of needs assessment and targeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

### 1. Encouraging multi-stakeholder input

Participation by affected communities in recovery efforts is critical to reduce the negative effects of discrimination. Recovery efforts should incorporate the views of community representatives, local officials, women, and poor communities. One option for establishing multi-stakeholder input is through the organization of a community recovery committee (CRC) to manage relief and recovery activities (see Box 6.2). A CRC benefits disaster-affected individuals in two ways. Firstly, it helps to ensure that communities lead their own recovery. Secondly, by ensuring that a diverse group of individuals has a role and voice in the committee, the recovery effort is more likely to meet the needs of a greater variety of constituents, including those historically discriminated against such as the poor and low-caste families. Additionally, strong humanitarian partnerships help balance individual interests and discrimination and improve recovery because no single individual is sufficiently capable of responding to any crisis.

Focusing relief and recovery on women, as a key group of stakeholders, can ensure that investment is more likely to be spent on long-term family needs. Joint support to women and men in a household has been very successful in shelter support. For example, registering structures jointly (between husband and wife) prevents women from being excluded if the husband dies. This good practice was noted in the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2005 South Asia earthquake.

### 2. Developing organizational anti-discrimination capacity

Often, humanitarian organizations that want to overcome discrimination focus on an anti-discrimination policy or checklist. This is a good and useful step, especially if they use locally-resourced people, but they could go further by reviewing their own organizational culture of discrimination.

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated much of Central America. The unprecedented international response to the disaster provided affected countries with the opportunity to go beyond relief and rehabilitation – it provided the chance to undertake real sustainable development. In Honduras, the government and the Honduran Red Cross, supported by sister Red Cross societies and the Spanish government, began a major construction project in the Amarateca valley. The aim of the project was to provide 541 families from Tegucigalpa – whose houses were literally erased from the map by landslides – with safer, quality housing and a water and sanitation system. It also aimed to link the physical reconstruction with longer-term regeneration, which would integrate social, economic, environmental and cultural elements. However, problems soon started to arise as community participation in the local committees decreased sharply and intra-familial and youth violence increased.

The Honduran Red Cross responded by organizing a workshop with the community. Using the Better Programming Initiative (BPI), they examined the reasons for the drop in the community's commitment and involvement in the implementation of the projects.

### What is BPI?

BPI is an impact assessment tool adapted by the International Federation from the Local Capacities for Peace Project (LCPP) and is based on the 'do-no-harm' approach. BPI analyses the positive and negative impact of aid and humanitarian programmes on communities. It helps to better understand how the assistance that the aid organization is proposing to deliver affects community power and social relations. By using BPI, the International Federation is able to implement programmes that not only avoid reinforcing existing inequality and discrimination, but can also help local people strengthen their capacities, thereby encouraging longer-term, sustainable recovery.

### How does BPI work?

BPI is a tool that can be used at any stage of the project planning cycle. It facilitates systematic context analysis to ensure that programming decisions are made with a thorough investigation of the interaction between the context and the intervention.

The BPI methodology applies five analytical steps:

1. **Context analysis:** identify and rank the dividers and connectors that characterize the context.
2. **Aid programme description:** describe planned actions in detail: why, where, what, when, with whom, by whom and, most importantly, how is aid being offered?
3. **Impact identification:** will aid reinforce or weaken existing dividers and connectors? Aid may have impact through material consequences – who receives what – and symbolic consequences – who is legitimized and who is not.
4. **Options:** for each impact identified in step 3, brainstorm programming options that will decrease negative impact and reinforce positive impact.
5. **Repeat the analysis:** contexts change rapidly, as do constraints and opportunities for aid programming. Analysis should be undertaken as frequently as the project cycle permits.

The context analysis in Amarateca revealed some key dividers: breakdown of family units, power struggles among community leaders, violent youth groups (*maras*), a dependency on external aid, economic inequalities and a new community formed by arrivals from neighbouring areas. There were, however, some key connectors: common public services, the shared experience of poverty and Hurricane Mitch, religion, hope for a better quality of life and the commitment to reduce violence.

### Lessons learnt from BPI implementation

The BPI analysis in Amarateca showed that significant inequalities had been allowed to develop among beneficiaries. Projects did not reach all members of the community, the selection of local committee members was inappropriate and there was a lack of coordination between some organizations – the quality of houses varied and they were allocated on the basis of varying criteria. Representatives from key community groups, such as youth groups, were not part of local committees. Whether done inadvertently or intentionally, excluding community members increases suspicion and local tensions. It is clear that a lack of knowledge and understanding of the local context can lead to discrimination in humanitarian work. Thorough context analysis that is reviewed during the project cycle is essential.

For humanitarian organizations, there are a number of lessons to be learnt. Accepting beneficiary selection from third parties or assigning excessive importance to one source of information is likely to result in accusations of discrimination and partiality. Genuinely vulnerable groups may be overlooked.

Furthermore, the perception of an aid organization is influenced by its structure and composition. If an organization's local staff base is not representative of all the groups in affected communities, its impartiality and reputation will be weakened.

Information for community members about aid allocation and the rationale behind it should not be overlooked. A lack of information fosters resentment and may leave some members of the community feeling excluded and irrelevant.

### Conclusion

Thanks to the BPI tool, the International Federation can better understand the impact of the interaction between its work and the context in which it operates. The use of BPI helped the Honduran Red Cross to understand that when a recovery project involves moving a community to a different location, pre-existing social and economic issues need to be considered. The Honduran Red Cross invited beneficiaries, including youth groups and teachers who were previously excluded, to revisit the programme together and to propose new activities, mainly managed by young people from the community, which helped reduce social tensions and violence. ■

Dr Bhanu, a field manager responding to the floods that hit India and Bangladesh in July 2006, claims: "Large organizations such as ours invite a consultant, often from outside the affected area or community or even from Geneva, to hold training on how to address discrimination in humanitarian work."

Such training initiatives may address some discriminatory attitudes and practices but, as they focus on field staff, they may not address organization-wide attitudes and

practices. The field teams, who are often the only ones to receive such training, are quickly disillusioned. "Soon, the quality and quantity of anti-discrimination measures drop and mechanical activities continue. Creative energy to make a real difference is lost," concludes Ms Nafisa, a coordinator for an NGO working in Pakistan on the 2005 earthquake operation.

Becoming more inclusive means going beyond methodologies and projects. Lasting impact should not be sacrificed for the short-term win of a successful project.

### 3. Creating grievance-handling processes

Some success has been seen with the establishment of grievance procedures for disaster-affected communities. In Indian-administered Kashmir, following the 2005 earthquake, a *lok adalat* (people's court) was established for affected areas. The court did not consist of a physical building but a group of people who moved from village to village. People could go to the court and register their complaints about the relief process. The court considered few cases of intentional discrimination based on lines of caste or social or economic status. Most complaints were about inadvertent discrimination by NGOs and governments between equally needy neighbours, weaknesses in relief systems and unfair treatment. A court such as the *lok adalat* serves as a proactive effort to register injustices by offering a rapid and convenient grievance procedure.

When establishing a formal grievance system, relief organizations should consider proactively seeking out groups that may have concerns with the recovery process. The poorest and most disadvantaged groups may be the least likely to come forward to complain.

Village members in the Indian districts of Villupuram and Nagapattinam created methods for maintaining transparency, with written lists displayed on public buildings, such as on a school or temple wall, detailing all external assistance received by each household. This helped citizens to see what the *panchayat* (locality) received in their name and from which organization.

### 4. Supporting local capability to recover

The TEC found that some groups, such as fishermen after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, were better organized than others and also more successful at accessing aid than other less organized groups, such as coastal farmers. This reflects their collective power and their ability to work together effectively in focusing agency actions on their needs.

Increasing the voice of disadvantaged community claim-holders is especially important. When it is not possible to arrange multi-stakeholder governance systems, parallel systems should be set up to ensure that neglected groups do not fall further

behind. For example, separate meetings organized solely for women may encourage them to talk openly and to discuss their needs. Member-based organizations may provide services only to those within their organizations. These actions, while discriminating against those outside their membership, are seen as legitimate as the members are the organization's investors.

## Constraints and limitations

Strategies to make relief and recovery interventions work better sometimes fail or have unintended impacts. Some of these result in discrimination that increases risk for those who are to be assisted. Targeting service provision may exacerbate community and political tensions. This may happen when programme support targets low-caste individuals and fails to help other poor families.

Agencies may be overly focused on particular strategies and unable to consider that important groups may be excluded. For example, support for sustainable livelihoods is widely considered good practice. However, a sharp focus on replacing livelihood assets means that some of the most vulnerable individuals, such as manual labourers, are not assisted simply because they lacked assets in the first place.

Constraints that often accompany development and recovery assistance – for example, the pursuit of established project results within budget limitations, time and donor pressure and the need for visibility – often do not allow humanitarian agencies the flexibility they require to make just decisions on the ground. The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami affected two areas that simultaneously suffered from civil conflict. In Sri Lanka, some areas affected by conflict had been home to displaced people for decades. When the tsunami came, so did funding to support tsunami-affected groups – sometimes to the exclusion of conflict-affected groups. As one farmer living on the border of Ampara and Batticaloa districts in Sri Lanka said: "It is hard to tell if we are recovering from the impact of tsunami or from the impact of ongoing conflict. To me, what matters is recovery." Unfortunately, the inflexibility of back donors, who are not sensitive to the actual situation on the ground, means that funds are earmarked for specific disaster types – not for communities.

# Anti-discrimination in the project management cycle

Project cycle management may be organized into several general steps: needs assessment and targeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. In disaster management, pressure to act and save lives may distort this. The following discussion is in line with this process, explaining how the four strategies listed above can be integrated in order to reduce discrimination.

## Needs assessment and targeting

The humanitarian teams leading the field-level actions need to have experience and an understanding of humanitarian discrimination and its challenges. "They need to know who is being included in the relief process, but also who is not, and be restless about the fact that almost all humanitarian actions end up discriminating against one or the other group," says Kartik Manoj, a field worker with an international non-governmental organization (INGO) in southern India.

If humanitarian response has to build on local capacities, it will need to start by differentiating between local people who will not tolerate discrimination and those who perpetuate it. When the assessment team consists of outsiders, they should establish relations with or include and employ local community members to lead the recovery effort. "As local people, we reach out to groups better and faster, but may also turn a blind eye to exclusion without often realizing it ourselves," reflected Revathi, a local social worker employed by an INGO. She described how she had to struggle to promote small and Dalit farmers, whose land became saline after the tsunami and who were discriminated against by many INGOs because they had decided only to support fishermen.

In some instances, the inclusion of community members is achieved through the establishment of a community recovery committee, or through existing rural or village development societies. In such cases, the community leads the process. The CRCs are very useful for those who are included, but represent a "wall of stone" for those who are excluded, as described by members of such a committee from Kutch, Gujarat, following the 2001 earthquake. Individuals of this committee should be trained in conducting inclusive and equitable needs assessments. Increasingly, such CRCs are formed but they are not always given the time to start up and the resources to carry out their tasks. In addition, they lack the skills required to communicate their findings in the formal relief and humanitarian system (see Box 6.3).

There are several advantages to a trained local recovery committee conducting the assessment: very often they know who is poor in their own community and what is needed, and they possess the requisite language skills. "They also know the methods to collect information rapidly and without much cost," noted NGO team leader Sukhdev Patel. The committee should include a diverse group, in terms of ethnicity, background and gender, as well as several individuals from the affected community, as this will increase pressures for equity in decision-making. Nevertheless, a diverse group does not ensure the inclusion of a diversity of victims as the needs assessment, reporting, field visit methods, and tools may not be diversity sensitive. Incorporating a diversity of views into community assessments is sometimes difficult. One approach to address this is for the CRC to conduct assessments and distributions jointly with other community organizations, government officers, or external relief agencies.

## Box 6.3 Community surveys

The community survey method was developed by the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) based on the experience they gained since 1998 conducting reviews. The community survey method was further expanded to document community views following the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India. Its development has led to a wider use of surveys, notably after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. The method was specifically designed to consult, capture and analyse community feedback on disaster relief and recovery. It can be a useful tool for anti-discrimination practice by improving accountability towards beneficiaries and by providing feedback to relief organizations on community experiences.

The method is straightforward. Researchers facilitate community discussions with the assistance of three adaptable, participatory exercises: a matching game, a ranking exercise and a timeline exercise. The community focus group discussions are complemented with individual interviews to allow cross-checking. A set of tables, record sheets and matrix sheets were designed to assist the research team in gathering information. Focusing on the allocation of relief, community involvement and changes in community capacity has allowed researchers to gain insights into discrimination in the relief process.

Following the Gujarat earthquake, there was an evaluation of the Disasters Emergency Committee's (DEC) expenditure. According to Sarah Routley, who took part in the evaluation, the Gujarat survey found that "[t]here were many examples where the processes used by agencies led to discrimination according to gender, location, caste, wealth/poverty, and visibility… Women, lower caste groups and those representing smaller numbers of people stated they were left out of decision-making… and hence were also omitted from relief distributions often because the process used excluded them from participating".

Tony Vaux, a consultant with international experience in disasters and development, has been a team leader of evaluations utilizing this methodology. He notes: "Community surveys are an important tool for identifying and monitoring discrimination… It is generally best to leave decisions about distributions to local communities while building in checks to ensure that the community is not captured by an elite." Community surveys are one of these checks and serve as an example of how multi-stakeholder input in the project cycle can help humanitarian agencies – as well as donors, the media and others – detect and rectify both intended and unintended discrimination. ■

For the intervening organization, there should be a well-established rationale, criteria and processes for intervention (see Box 6.4). There should also be guidelines for field teams – with whom the organization should work – encouraging local people to manage their recovery through community committees. It should also give them a structure to do so. The poorest groups may be overlooked because they live in physical isolation from their own village; therefore, discovering who may be discriminated against is difficult. An oversight mechanism should exist among field managers to ensure that discrimination against poor and marginalized groups is minimized in the work of the CRC. They may also provide technical input to the CRC when necessary.

Cross-checking the assessments of the CRCs is usually straightforward. Humanitarian agencies offering support can quickly verify CRC assessments.

## Box 6.4 Avoiding discrimination: lessons from the Health and Peacebuilding Filter

Avoiding discrimination is a key component of more effective programming: the Health and Peacebuilding Filter and its associated Companion Guide presents a set of questions that any project might ask of itself and its partners. The filter adopts a 'do-no-harm' approach and seeks to ensure that any project or programme does not inadvertently make matters worse in already sensitive settings.

Project and programme designers are invited to respond to four statements, identifying whether or not the project effectively addresses these:

1. The project seeks to promote tolerance and reduce discrimination.
2. The project contributes to addressing inequalities within the community.
3. The project makes effective provision for inclusion of specific vulnerable groups.
4. The project ensures that access is not limited by economic or other barriers.

### 1. The project seeks to promote tolerance and reduce discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of individuals or communities on the basis of attributes such as race, colour, gender, language, religion, politics, national or social origin, wealth or some other influence on status.

In order to promote tolerance and avoid discrimination, agencies may consider the following:

■ What are the existing tensions and forms of discrimination in the community? To what extent is group discrimination present? Are there any systematic forms of discrimination that lead to differential access to food, water, education, shelter, employment opportunities or other income-generating activities? Are these reflected in differential access to services, resources, information and rights?

■ Do the services discriminate between groups in relation to how services are offered or accessed? To what extent does the recruitment of staff, the delivery of services, or involvement of various community groups in project management suggest discriminatory approaches to different communities?

■ Does the project identify and respond to those with greatest need in the area?

### 2. The project contributes to addressing inequalities within the community

Clearly, aside from not doing harm, the project could more explicitly assist in addressing inequalities that are present in the communities involved.

■ Does the project identify the nature of inequalities in the community? What are the patterns? Have these patterns changed over time? Are they getting better or worse? What are they based on? What could be done to modify and address them and, more particularly, to reduce the gaps between the haves and have-nots?

■ Consider the various inequalities in health or education or employment status, in access to services, and in access to those factors that influence these entitlements.

■ Does the project or service attempt to address these, and in what way?

### 3. The project makes effective provision for inclusion of specific vulnerable groups

Particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable communities and individuals – those with the least resources to protect and sustain themselves.

- These groups may not be proactive in seeking the services they need. Could they be assisted to demand the services to which they are entitled?
- What special measures, if any, has the project taken to ensure it effectively reaches these populations? What more could be done?
- Does the project or programme monitor access to services by vulnerable groups? Are data collected and disaggregated by age, sex and the area from which people come so as to determine whether all people have comparable access?

### 4. The project ensures that access is not limited by economic or other barriers

Access to services may be limited by economic and financial concerns, geographical factors such as distance and social factors. Examples of these barriers may include: charges for services, the cost of transport to get to services, distance and time to get to a particular place, insensitivity to culture experienced within services, and discrimination against particular groups.

- Are the project services available to all groups, at broadly equivalent cost and in the same way to everyone regardless of ethnicity, gender, economic status and other attributes?
- Are there any hidden costs associated with accessing project services such as transport or insecurity? Does the project attempt to address these difficulties in order to enhance access?
- Are any systems and mechanisms in place to ensure that those least well-off are still able to access services? Have efforts been focused on the most vulnerable individuals and groups? Are some communities offered exemptions from charges? On what basis are these decisions made and who operates these systems?
- Is the activity promoted throughout the community? Are people who are not literate at all, or only literate in a particular language, able to fully access information about the services available? Are services promoted and offered to all language groups? Does the project promote dignity and respect for beneficiaries, community members and all social subgroups, especially the most vulnerable groups?

These key questions can help any project or programme assess what it is doing to reduce discrimination and promote more equitable access to services. This material, compiled from the Health and Peacebuilding Filter, can be further adapted for local use. These questions can also be used as a means of provoking discussion, debate and better practice. ■

Project proposals based on initial assessments should include photos and data. Recently, there has been a trend in favour of discrimination that can be measured and counted, and against discrimination that is anecdotal. Stories of discrimination are not always enough to pursue compensation from government authorities or humanitarian agencies.

Organizations with experience in disaster recovery generally conduct their own needs assessments and design their own intervention plan before submission to a donor. Local agencies with an established reputation for equity and good performance are, however, not always able to demonstrate this through the proposal systems that are typically required by donors. In addition, pressure with respect to time and resources, as well as the complexities of coordination across and within support teams, sometimes preclude local organizations from developing proposals that suit large donors' submission guidelines. As a result, there is funding discrimination in favour of those who write proposals quickly but may have a weaker local presence.

## Implementation

The Mombasa branch of the Kenya Red Cross Society only registers women as heads of households in communities where there are multiple families with only one father or husband. This prevents the marginalization of less influential wives and their children. Creating CRCs is likely to increase the participation of local individuals in project design and implementation which, in turn, builds local organizational and recovery capacities. For example, when community members themselves manage the

A construction project gets under way in Choluteca, Honduras. The programme will provide permanent housing for survivors of Hurricane Mitch.

Yoshi Shimizu/
International Federation

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

recovery effort, they may learn and use skills in project management and in other technical areas that they may not already possess.

The ownership of permanent shelters built with government or private assistance is an area of challenge and discrimination. An example of good practice is to register new structures in the name of both the male and female heads of the household. This helps secure the female position in the family and social structure. According to John Twigg, the author of *Technology, Post-disaster Housing Reconstruction and Livelihood Security*, "joint ownership made women feel more secure and proud, and it appeared to reduce the incidence of marital conflict and domestic violence as well as improving relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law".

At the centre of discrimination in implementation are two basic formal forces. Firstly, the institutional distinction between relief and risk reduction dictates that the majority of disaster management resources are directed towards, and consumed in, relief efforts. Recent global efforts to mainstream risk reduction have helped improve this. They have been successful, to an extent.

Secondly, the industry standard of credibility is more focused on financial credibility than credibility in the eyes of recovering communities. Even beneficiary surveys, popular since the Gujarat earthquake – such as the 2002 UK Disasters Emergency Committee evaluation and the 2002 *Community Survey: Gujarat Earthquake 2001* by AIDMI and the ProVention Consortium – are for head offices and donors. Efforts to share the results of these surveys more widely within the humanitarian response sector and with the communities themselves rarely come to fruition, as pressures from many sides limit the follow-up.

In order to reduce improper discrimination against local recovery efforts, tools and techniques are required to assess and monitor an agency's credibility within a community that could result in a 'community credibility rating'. Methods to award such ratings already exist, as was shown in the UK Disasters Emergency Committee's Gujarat earthquake evaluation; but they are often not used or encouraged. Resources should be prioritized to organizations that score high on such a rating. "But is it possible? Whose recovery is it? Is recovery a project of NGOs or INGOs? Or is recovery a right of affected communities towards human security?" asks a southern India-wide coastal network coordinator, Jacob Dharamaraj (see Box 6.5).

## Monitoring and evaluation

Identifying and reducing humanitarian discrimination during monitoring and evaluation can be encouraged through clearly identified and open evaluation procedures. The ability of individual evaluators to distil and share lessons on discrimination for future use is critical.

Community recovery committees (CRCs) – made up of local people – emerge following disasters to lead efforts in relief and long-term recovery. CRCs are created in the aftermath of a disaster or they evolve from existing structures and take on new roles and responsibilities.

In Kenya, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities participate with the district government authorities in district disaster management groups (DDMGs). These DDMGs have been invested with decision-making powers, devolved from central government disaster management structures, to determine not only the needs on the ground and the resources required, but also to decide which humanitarian agency will take the lead for specific humanitarian activities. The fact that these DDMGs were able to coordinate local humanitarian agencies at the district level, led the Kenya Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to modify their normal approach to disaster assessment. They planned their responses to the 2004–2006 droughts on assessments at the district level, rather than organizing their own needs assessments.

When CRCs work in tandem with humanitarian agencies, there is significant scope for reducing action that may be inadvertently discriminatory. In response to severe flooding in Gujarat, India, during 2006, a committee in the town of Kheda worked with a support agency to determine which 15 families out of the 200 requesting assistance would receive shelter support. The CRC and support agency visited the locations of the families to assess who was most in need of assistance. ■

There is also concern among the humanitarian evaluation community that evaluators are selected based on whom they have evaluated for in the past and not for their understanding of the local context. How many local evaluators are hired by international organizations? Thus, the bias against observing discrimination and the local context in favour of observing institutional and project objectives continues. Moreover, "once discrimination is found, what actions are taken? How many agencies that we know are denied funds or operational responsibility for being able to be inclusive enough?" asked Palani Thurai, of Gandhigram University, Tamil Nadu, during the evaluation of a global federation of INGOs. Donors committed to eliminate discrimination should invest in such a 'joint anti-discrimination index' and make it public. However, this is easier said than done. Federative structures such as the UK Disasters Emergency Committee may take a lead in recognizing and rating the actions of its members to promote anti-discrimination.

New and innovative systems for conducting evaluations that address inclusion are neglected in favour of old methods. As previously stated, evaluations are typically project- or organization-dominated. This reflects neither the multidisciplinary effects

that disasters and humanitarian responses have on local systems nor the multidisciplinary nature of discrimination. The trend towards joint evaluations is an important development that should be supported to improve further accountability and application. AIDMI is proposing joint and mixed evaluations, with mixed coverage, mixed methods, and mixed teams for evaluation. Evaluations have suffered from a lack of creativity and imagination in their methods, presentation and use. Will we ever see multimedia evaluations? Discrimination, when reported through multimedia, is better communicated. Evaluations conducted with respect to needs, rights and wider impacts, not project objectives, will help identify situations where discrimination has taken place (see Box 6.6).

Agencies will be better able to identify and address discrimination by organizing a diverse group of individuals to conduct *their* evaluations. The group should include individuals from both the agency and the disaster-affected community.

In order to support an environment that is conducive to reducing discrimination in evaluation, the following are recommended:
- Evaluations should not be conducted based on needs that were assessed in the past, nor should they use a top-down approach.
- Communities and local agencies should be supported to evaluate donor ability to learn from projects conducted in the name of the community.
- Community ratings are needed of NGO and donor performance.

## Conclusion

Resolutions, commitments, codes and principles have helped and continue to help guide the humanitarian system towards relief and recovery strategies that are more effective. These are both too many and not enough. They are too many in the sense that humanitarian actors are overwhelmed by a variety of issues and priorities that they should mainstream into their efforts; from anti-discrimination to gender balance and risk reduction. Yet, they are not enough in that a new organizational culture is needed among major humanitarian actors to encourage field staff to take their own initiatives towards achieving improved inclusion.

In humanitarian crises, local and external recovery teams are pressured into making decisions rapidly and with less than adequate information. Some degree of discrimination will result at each level and in each phase. Recovery specialists should be aware that inclusion requires constant vigilance throughout the project cycle.

Above all, understanding and respect for the complex cultural context of the relief and recovery interventions and the use of the various strategies and mechanisms to detect, minimize and address discrimination will greatly improve the effectiveness and equity of recovery assistance.

## Box 6.6 Challenging discrimination: measuring the impact of what we do in emergencies

Save the Children UK has developed an impact, monitoring and assessment framework that aims to provide accountability to the people with and for whom we work – especially children. While itially designed to assess impact in ongoing development work, the system is proving to be equally applicable in emergencies and humanitarian interventions. Global Impact Monitoring (GIM) was developed in 2001 to improve the way the organization measures and summarizes the impact of its work.

In addition, as Save the Children moved increasingly towards a child rights-based approach to programming, it needed a system for monitoring and assessing impact that would reflect this approach.

The key elements of GIM are:

■ a focus on impact
■ a common framework, which affords comparison across country and regional programmes within a particular theme of work
■ a country-level process that identifies positive and negative changes in people's lives in conjunction with external and internal stakeholders, and a focus on what works and what does not under different circumstances

After being piloted from 2001 to 2003, it was rolled out across the whole organization in 2004. GIM measures changes that have occurred as a result of interventions along five dimensions of change. These dimensions are:

1. changes in the lives of children and young people
2. changes in policies and practices that affect children's rights
3. changes in children's and young people's participation and active citizenship
4. changes in equity and non-discrimination of children and young people

5. changes in civil society's and communities' capacity to support children's rights

The GIM process requires programmes to first identify the specific changes they want to achieve, ensuring they encapsulate all five dimensions of change; then develop monitoring systems to gather data, both qualitative and quantitative, about whether these changes have occurred and their impact. This should be built into ongoing monitoring and periodic review and reflection processes. Country programmes choose methods of data collection that are most appropriate to the given context, but all programmes must involve stakeholders – including children and young people – as part of this process and make their voices paramount when judging success. Involving stakeholders and looking beyond predetermined indicators has the added advantage of highlighting any unintended and negative impacts.

In 2006, a Global Impact Monitoring exercise was conducted for the Tsunami Response Programme in Chennai, India. It became clear from the GIM stakeholder meetings that long-standing issues of discrimination that existed pre-tsunami made some communities more vulnerable post-tsunami. These findings led Save the Children to commission a larger report, *A Study on Non-Discrimination in the Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme in India*. The report indicated that children already subjected to some form of discrimination were possibly not only more affected by the tsunami but also, in some cases, excluded from relief and rehabilitation support. Information available suggests that there were more deaths among girls and children with disabilities than boys. Mobility and ability to swim appear to be two key factors in explaining the statistics.

During the relief stage, entrenched patterns of discrimination were not addressed and were possibly reinforced. Dalit children received leftover clothing in relief camps and, as one Dalit girl said: "We are still living in a hut. Look at our neighbours from that village over there. Some of them have better houses than they had before."

Some post-tsunami policies had a detrimental effect on specific groups. The state government offered 20,000 rupees for marriages that had to be abandoned because of the tsunami. This led to a rise in the marriage of adolescent girls, in some cases to men who were old enough to be their fathers. Adolescent boys were another vulnerable group. The provision of new boats saw many forced into unpaid and hazardous work as boat labourers. These examples reflect just a fraction of the findings from the report, with tribal groups, female-headed households and settlers also being affected.

As a result, Save the Children made a series of recommendations for itself, other agencies, and district and state governments. The recommendations include the need for a greater focus on pre-existing social hierarchies and better awareness of discrimination in disaster preparedness activities – to ensure that those children who are marginalized, such as those with disabilities, are able to participate and be accounted for in disaster planning. It is also recommended that relief and rehabilitation interventions should map pre-existing patterns of discrimination and, if necessary, ensure a focus on those groups who have been previously excluded. ◼

## Recommended good practices to minimize discrimination in disaster recovery

1. Agencies that have a well-established rationale, criteria and processes for intervention and issue guidelines for field teams – with whom the agencies should work – are more likely to foster productive relations with communities and local partners.
2. Community recovery committees – a diverse group including different ethnicities, backgrounds and genders that are well trained, with adequate resources and able to communicate with the formal humanitarian system – can greatly assist equitable assistance. An oversight mechanism to ensure that discrimination against poor and neglected groups is minimized in the committees is needed and their assessments should be cross-checked.
3. Grievance processes that allow people to file their complaints and rapidly receive rulings regarding weaknesses in the relief system, discrimination and unfair treatment.
4. Providing access for communities to important information and services, such as multilingual pamphlets detailing entitlements, can increase community capabilities to coordinate with government and aid agencies and help them lead the recovery of their communities.
5. In situations where there is 'positive discrimination' for certain groups who have been traditionally left out of development and humanitarian assistance, or for

specific assistance priorities (infrastructure, livelihoods etc.), then higher levels of participation of community members will allow them to understand the rationale for such discrimination.

6. Registering new structures built in the aftermath of a disaster in the name of both male and female heads of household may help secure the female position in the family and social structures.

7. Displaying lists of external assistance received by each household on public institutions (schools, religious and community buildings) establishes local transparency systems.

8. Donor awareness of the importance of comprehensive needs assessments is necessary to reduce the potential for discrimination.

9. Identifying and reducing humanitarian discrimination during monitoring and evaluation can be encouraged through clearly identified and open evaluation procedures, and through joint and mixed evaluations. The use of mixed methods – including multimedia and open and frank discussions, and mixed teams involving evaluators with an understanding of the local context – is useful. Certain tools such as social equity audits and 'missing voices' interviews can also help.

## Note

Some of the names in this chapter have been changed to protect those who have contributed to the work of AIDMI.

*Principal contributors to this chapter were Mihir Bhatt, Honorary Director of the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, a community-based action research, planning and advocacy organization, who also contributed Box 6.3 and Box 6.5; Steve Penny, a disaster and security management consultant, who is currently working in the area of disaster risk reduction, security management and inter-agency collaboration. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Mehul Pandya and Tommy Reynolds, respectively coordinator of the Regional Risk Transfer Initiative, AIDMI, and consultant, AIDMI. Box 6.1 was contributed by Tony Beck, a researcher and author who investigates the ways in which poor women and men cope with natural disasters. Box 6.2 was contributed by Iñigo Barrena, an independent consultant specializing in disaster risk reduction and recovery. Box 6.4 was contributed by Anthony Zwi, Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Box 6.6 was contributed by Tina Hyder, Global Diversity Adviser at Save the Children UK.*

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CHAPTER 6

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CHAPTER 6

## Web sites

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) **www.alnap.org**

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) **www.southasiadisasters.net**

Department for International Development (DFID) **www.dfid.gov.uk**

Disasters Emergency Committee **www.dec.org.uk**

Good Humanitarian Donorship **www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org**

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International **www.hapinternational.org**

ProVention Consortium **www.proventionconsortium.org**

The Sphere Project **www.sphereproject.org**

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) **www.tsunami-evaluation.org**

UN Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery **www.tsunamispecialenvoy.org/about**

CHAPTER 6