EFICOR Tsunami Response

Highlights of the response and challenges faced

EFICOR

• EFICOR started as a response to disaster in 1967.
• Major interventions have included:
  • Andhra cyclone in 1977
  • Uttarkashi earthquake in 1991,
  • Latur earthquake in 1993,
  • Orissa super cyclone in 1999,
  • Gujarat earthquake in 2002,
  • Bihar flood in 2004,
  • Tsunami disaster in 2004/5
• Currently the Kashmir earthquake.

Tsunami 2004-05

• The tsunami disaster that struck on 26th Dec 2004, called for a response on a scale that EFICOR had hitherto not encountered. In terms of logistics, number of families covered and finances this has been the biggest intervention for EFICOR so far.

Highlights of the response

Speed of intervention

• EFICOR leadership team immediately swung into action establishing contact with other staff and moving staff to the tsunami affected areas on the next day itself (27th Dec).

Staffing

• Immediate repositioning of staff.
• Staff with knowledge of the local language were transferred or temporarily posted to the tsunami areas.
• Previous training and exposure provided to staff helped in the efficient implementation.
**Changing according to need**

- EFICOR reacted to changing needs in the field. In Nagapattinam, toilets and bath rooms were constructed which was highly appreciated.

**Advocacy**

- EFICOR’s advocacy on behalf of the community and the particular situation of the community in 2 villages in Cuddalore district meant that EFICOR was able to choose the design for the temporary shelters.

**Use of volunteers**

- A key element in responding to any disaster is volunteers. During the tsunami disaster, volunteers were mobilised both at the Delhi office and in the field (helping in posting appeal letters, packing of relief materials).

**Local partners**

- EFICOR worked in partnership with local organisations. EFICOR partners FMPB responded on the first day in Chennai city, ESAF were involved in relief measures in Colachel, CROSS in 2 districts of Tamil Nadu.

**Community Participation**

- Community members moved with EFICOR staff to purchase boats.
- In the CFW programme, EFICOR spent time to explain the need for clearing and participating in manual work. EFICOR’s work was commended by the govt and other NGOs who had not been able to convince the community.

**Networking**

- EFICOR was part of co-ordination meetings as far as possible in New Delhi, Chennai and the various fields. This enabled EFICOR to learn from what others were doing and also to present concerns.
Donor meetings

- EFICOR organised a meeting inviting all funding partners in early February to assess the situation, planning and future funding needs.
- A similar meeting was called in July to reflect on the programme and make future plans.

Involvement of other staff

- All the staff were involved in some way or the other – prayer, mobilization of resources, participating in media discussions.
- Daily briefings were given to all staff in the initial stage which then became weekly as the response moved ahead. This ensured unity and a sense of togetherness in the whole organisation in spite of added pressure.

Fund-raising and communication

- Communication lines were open immediately.
- Daily, weekly and now monthly updates posted on website and sent via email.

Participation of the Indian church

- Through regular communication, presentations by staff in their own churches and through EFI appeal the Indian church responded tremendously.
- Every donation has been acknowledged and people kept informed of the use of their funds.

Challenges

- EFICOR based its intervention on rapid assessment and on what other NGOs were doing. A number of decisions were also based on previous experience.
Need Assessment

- Food component - EFICOR reacted to the sufficient supply of food already being distributed by taking a strategic decision of delaying and staggering the distribution. Food distribution was completed only by the end of July which is far too long and can no longer qualify as emergency food distribution.

- In Andaman and Nicobar Islands - the beneficiaries were not known. Although EFICOR tried at various levels to advocate for the community this did not have much impact, hence the intervention in Andaman was controlled by the Administration giving little room to adapt.

Staffing

- Regular staff had to work over time in all areas to complete all work.
- EFICOR took time to recruit competent staff to occupy all positions. There is still a struggle to recruit female staff at the field.
- Recruitment of staff is an issue – what will happen to ‘surplus’ staff at the end of the project?

Lack of expertise?

- Response is inadequate in terms of trauma counselling. Although certain programmes have been done and staff have very good relationship with the community, it has not been possible to adequately address the psycho-social support.

Partnership

- Organisations have different systems of management and works styles. It takes time working out a smooth way of joint interventions.

Planning and Organisational preparedness

- In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands EFICOR moved out only after 6 months. In hindsight and after the evaluation, it was evident that EFICOR was commended for the work done but could not build on it due to the quick exit. This proved to be a lost opportunity.
Weak areas in advocacy

- EFICOR went along with the government specification in Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari. In Andaman, EFICOR worked like government contractors.

Co-ordination with government

- Co-ordination with the govt worked very well in Cuddalore but it has been difficult in Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari especially as it involves many meetings.
- In Andaman a lot of the time was spent liaising with the government with no significant impact.

Demands from funding agencies

- Donor meetings were called to club visits. However, huge investment on the part of all donors has necessitated numerous visits that have proved to be time consuming for the staff.

Demands from funding agencies

- Funding agencies have expected us to co-operate with other implementers but have little co-ordination themselves.
- Different reporting formats (narrative and separate financial statements) and different deadlines have added pressure on staff.

Lessons learnt from experience

- Lessons learnt from past experience were not strongly emphasised.
- Staff care - Some stayed beyond the time they should have, inadequate preparation of staff, not enough orientation, inadequate briefing and de-briefing.

Too many NGOs

- Influx of a huge number of NGOs - there was lack of concentrated effort. There was competition rather than complementing each other's work. This did not help the communities.
Pressure on Finance

- The budget for tsunami is 5 times the Annual budget. This has put pressure on the finance systems.

Future

- Needs of the community are beyond relief and development. Tamil Nadu is not a focus area for EFICOR for development programmes.