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RAISING THE FUNDS – SPENDING THE FUNDS: A CASE STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BOTH ROLES OF NGOs

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ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must be effective in both raising funds and using these funds to implement programs in order to improve the circumstances of the poor. This chapter presents a case study of World Vision Australia’s (WVA) fundraising and programming responses to the Asian Tsunami. The initial stages of the fundraising campaign were largely unplanned and reactive. Yet WVA received over $110 million for its tsunami appeal in just a little over three months. This is incomparable with other recent large-scale disaster fundraising campaigns. The experiences of how the initial phases of the response were implemented are gauged through a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with twenty-one staff members who completed short-term secondments during the initial tsunami response. These interviews extract a number of reflections of WVA’s programming and provide a number of lessons for WVA for future complex humanitarian emergencies. This chapter thus reviews the effectiveness of both roles of NGOs – raising funds and expending these funds to implement programs.

INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have two important roles. NGOs must be effective in both raising funds and using these funds to implement programs in order to improve the circumstances of the poor. This chapter presents a case study of World Vision Australia’s (WVA) fundraising and programming responses to the Asian Tsunami.

The vast majority of the literature surrounding the role of NGOs in international development focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency of their work in developing
countries. However, very little research has focused on the other role of NGOs – fundraising. This omission is interesting as the ability of NGOs to undertake effective community development initiatives is predicated on their ability to raise both private and public funds to finance these interventions. If NGOs are unable to raise funds, they are unable to undertake development interventions. Yet the literature that does concern fundraising is largely limited to a perceived tension between marketing departments using negative images to illicit donations based on guilt or paternalistic emotions and the development programming departments trying to empower local communities (see for example Billis and MacKeith 2004; Folwer 2002; Edwards and Fowler 2002; Edwards and Sen 2002). Whilst this dichotomy may exist, greater consideration of the marketing activities of NGOs is now required to investigate how effective NGOs have become in this ‘other role’. New research is required to reflect and examine how programming and marketing departments in NGOs now work in close partnership to both educate and encourage commitment to donate and undertake other social action by supporters (both public and corporate) over the longer term. One of the consequences of this has been the partnerships built between NGOs and public companies, such as media organizations and other service providers. The strength of these partnerships combined with the perception of integrity surrounding NGOs has resulted in many commercial organizations seeking relationships with NGOs to support their fund raising activities, especially in times of complex humanitarian emergencies (CHE).

This chapter will firstly present a case study of the fundraising activities in response to the Asian Tsunami by a single NGO in Australia – World Vision of Australia (WVA). It explores how WVA was able to effectively fundraise for the Asian Tsunami disaster without resorting to traditional ‘appeals to pity and compassion’ (Fowler 2002, p. 136), through its partnership with various commercial entities. As will be discussed, the initial stages of the fundraising campaign were largely unplanned and reactive. But having said that, senior managers within WVA understood the potential impact of the tsunami to be far greater than initially reported and based on this intuition organized the first NGO media event and maintained this media profile throughout the early stages of the tsunami response. WVA was able to draw on its programming, media and marketing experience to efficiently capture a large segment of the funds donated by the Australian public in response to the tsunami. WVA received over $110 million for its tsunami appeal in just a little over three months. This is incomparable with other recent large-scale disaster fundraising campaigns.

Consideration of how these funds were spent will then be undertaken. Twenty-one staff members who completed short-term secondments in the relief response were interviewed to gauge their experiences of how the initial phases of the tsunami response were implemented. The interviews provide a number of lessons for WVA, and other NGOs more generally, for future CHEs.

**THE ASIAN TSUNAMI**

A minute or so before 8.00 am (local time) on Sunday 26 December 2004, an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred thirty kilometres below sea level at 3.307° N
Raising the Funds – Spending the Funds

95.947° E. The closest land mass was 255 kilometres SSE at Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This was the fourth largest earthquake recorded since 1900, but the longest-lasting 10 minutes. The fault rapture was over 12,000 kilometres long. “The quake occurred where two of the giant plates that form the surface of the earth ground together. At that spot the Eurasian plate was pulled down by the descending Indo-Australian plate. The quake released the edge of the Eurasian plat, which sprang up, lifting the ocean floor and sending the sea water off in the giant wave that killed so many” (AP 2005, p. 14). The resulting tsunami directly affected 11 countries, killing up to 300,000 people and displacing over one million more. The eleven countries in South Asia and East Africa directly affected by the resulting tsunami were Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Somalia, Tanzania, Seychelles, and Kenya. Banda Aceh province of Indonesia and Sri Lanka were the worst affected.

Before 9.00 am (local time) the tsunami reached land at Banda Aceh and Southern Thailand. Within Two hours, it had reached Sri Lanka, the Maldives and India. The force of the tsunami caused immediate destruction and death. Sweeping all before its path, the rising ocean razed natural and human-made structures. No warnings systems were in place and local populations were caught completely unprepared for the resulting tsunami. The tsunami ranged in height between 3-10 metres throughout the region. On its eventual retreat, the extent of the damage clearly became evident. In addition to the human devastation, the geography of these countries was changed, with land being dragged into the sea, and shorelines shifted hundreds of metres inland. The damage to human and natural capital was enormous. While initial relief interventions were vital, so too are the now longer-term development and reconstruction interventions being implemented across all the countries affected. These interventions are only possible because of the funds raised by NGOs and funds pledged by governments.

THE FUNDRAISING RESPONSE

This section provides a day-to-day account of the unfolding events surrounding WVA’s fundraising events. They are a synthesis of a number of key informant interviews undertaken with key WVA staff involved with the marketing and programming response.

The first reports to WVA of the tsunami were received by the Relief Manager in the late afternoon of Sunday 26 December. These reports were sketchy and did not indicate the magnitude of the devastation that had occurred. No formal action was undertaken by WVA on this day. More accurate reports became available on Monday 27 December. These reports suggested that the number of deaths was 4000 with thousands more injured and up to one million people directly affected. The Asian Tsunami featured on the front page of The Australian newspaper with other reports filling a second page. News of the tsunami featured on the front page of The Australian everyday, until fatal bushfires occurred South Australia on the 11 January, 2005. This represents an unprecedented 16 days of a single event maintaining front page coverage. While the full extent of the devastation was still not evident, an intuitive feeling by key WVA staff (in Relief and Marketing) suggested that this was a disaster of significant proportion and had the very real potential of quickly becoming a CHE.
Table 1. Tsunami Reports in *The Australian* newspaper

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>27 December</td>
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<td>Front + 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 December</td>
<td>69,639</td>
<td>Front + 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 December</td>
<td>86,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2 January</td>
<td>126,000</td>
<td>Front + 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 January</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>Front + 4</td>
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<td>4 January</td>
<td>144,000</td>
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<td>5 January</td>
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<td>Front + 4</td>
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<td>7 January</td>
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<td>153,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 January</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>Front + 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 January</td>
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Source: author's own review

Based on this intuitive reaction, it was immediately decided to hold a press conference stating WVA's intentions of sending the newly appointed WVA CEO directly to Sri Lanka to visit the affected areas. An appeal for public donations was also simultaneously launched. The media team at WVA was assisted in this process by senior staff; however lower-level marketing staff on leave was not required to return to work at this stage. The subsequent press conference was well attended by the media. This was due to a number of coinciding events:

- this was the first tsunami-related press conference held by an NGO;
- Costello has a wide recognition factor in Victoria (due to long standing involvement in social justice issues, such as gambling) and growing national recognition (based on his brother, the Federal Treasurer – The Rt. Hon. Peter Costello); and
- the three week period following Christmas is traditionally a slow-media period due to the prominence of sporting events and number of senior politicians and other public figures taking personal leave

Due to this media lull and the growing awareness of the extent of the tsunami damage, a number of media outlets sent representatives to accompany WVA CEO to Sri Lanka. In addition to the accompanying media, WVA CEO was available to local (and international media) at all times during his stay in Sri Lanka. Further, other WVA media spokespeople were available from the 27 December onwards to respond to any further media queries. Also on the 27 December, the ANZ Bank directly approached WVA and offered their services as a collection point for people wishing to donate to WVA. They further suggested that this offer would be exclusive (in order to avoid confusion to their customers) effectively excluding other NGOs collecting funds through the bank. WVA did not commit immediately to this offer as previous practice was to avoid actively seeking donations through banks as it reduced...
the opportunity to collect donor information for future marketing purposes. Within twenty minutes of this offer from the ANZ, the National Australia Bank (NAB) also contacted WVA offering the same exclusive arrangements. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the effects of the tsunami were greater than originally suspected and that a generous public response was likely, WVA decide to accept the two banks’ offers and forego collecting donor information. Having informed each of the banks of their competitor’s offer, the banks accepted a co-operative position. These discussions took place on the 27 December, which was a bank holiday (in lieu of Boxing Day). This allowed time to prepare both signage and procedures to be ready in every ANZ and NAB branch on the 28 December, the first day of banking business since Christmas Eve. Due to the branch coverage of both companies, the public response was immediately overwhelming beating all initial expectations.

From December 28 (Tuesday), the WVA CEO began to be featured in nearly all print coverage of the tsunami as he was the only high profile Australian within the affected areas. Due to the continuing media coverage and prominence of WVA in this reporting, the WVA call centre received more donations in its first two hours of operation on 28 December than the total donations received through the call centre of any previous CHE campaign. Within two days, $5 million had been pledged through the call centre. For the first time, the WVA website also became a significant portal for the general public wishing to donate to WVA. On the first day $2 million was donated. In total nearly one quarter of WVA’s public donations were made on the internet. WVA also raised funds through SMS texting for the first time. In the past, discussions with telecommunication firms were unsuccessful due to claims of expense and technical difficulties. However, given the environment following the Asian Tsunami, an initial request from WVA to Optus to investigate fundraising through texting was quickly implemented resulting in $2 million in raised funds.

The direct marketing team also began preparing a major mail-out to general supporters. A mail-out was not scheduled, and so production and design teams worked to stringent deadlines. Most supporters received the mail-out on January 5, 2005. A targeted mail-out was also prepared for pre-identified high givers or wealthy supporters. Total funds raised from the direct marketing campaign were $8 million.

The first full WVA stakeholders meeting (made-up of Relief, Media and Marketing managers) was held on Wednesday 29 December. Following this meeting, a second meeting was held to disseminate information to the wider organization in order to develop a strategy to support WVA’s response to the tsunami. The wider meeting included representatives from Asia and Pacific Rim development, banking, major donors, corporate sponsors and web design teams. In addition, on Wednesday 29 December, Channel 7 approaches WVA seeking to exclusively promote WVA (without seeking WVA to cease co-operating with other media outlets). They felt that their viewers were confused with an array of NGO contact numbers and appeals and that by focussing solely on one NGO, a stronger message could be conveyed. WVA and Channel 7 had a pre-existing relationship, but it was not strong enough to expect this offer. It was immediately agreed that the Channel 7 breakfast program, Sunrise, would be broadcast live from WVA offices the following Friday (31 December). The entire program was dedicated to supporting the work of WVA in tsunami affected areas and eliciting

2 ANZ and WVA had a prior commercial relationship.
3 In actual fact, the banks were able to collect and supply this data – albeit with certain caveats for its on-going use by WVA.
financial support from the public. Due to various time zones, the call centre received non-stop calls from 6.00 am to 11.00 am ESDT and raised $4 million. Similar saturation attention followed in the evening news program. WVA’s phone number was exclusively listed by Channel 7 whenever the Asian Tsunami Disaster was reported.

The WVA CEO was still in Sri Lanka at this time and providing interviews to all media outlets, both domestically and internationally on behalf of the World Vision partnership. During Thursday 30 December, Channel 7 first raised the idea of initiating a fundraising concert. Again, in order to reduce confusion within the giving public, it proposed that WVA would be the sole recipient of the money raised and the sole NGO mentioned and promoted during the concert. A final decision regarding the viability of the concert was not reached until Tuesday (4 January).

From 1 January (Saturday) to 4 January (Tuesday), WVA was approached by the various media outlets and companies also seeking to exclusively promote WVA without expecting any obligations in return. The reason offered by these organisations was to minimise public confusion and thus maximise donations. The final decision to hold the fundraising concert was made only on Tuesday 4 January. Tickets to the concert, to be held at the Sydney Opera House sold out immediately they were released. Channel 7 then also sought co-operation with the other broadcasters (Channel 10 and 9 and various radio stations) to ensure the success of the concert resulting in simultaneous broadcast on all commercial TV stations and a large number of radio stations. WVA was not involved in the actual production of the concert.

Excluding the costs associated with the direct marketing campaign, the total sum of WVA fundraising expenditure to this point was $2000 (in order to hire a sound booth to record a (no-fee) voice-over. Yet $20 million had been raised.

During the weekend of 1 and 2 January, WVA was approached by the Australian Cricket Board (ACB). The ACB had been holding internal discussions over the previous week regarding their response to the tsunami. The ACB had decided that an international match featuring cricketers from Asia versus the rest of the world would be a suitable and appropriate fund-raising event. Unlike other organisations, a relationship between the ACB and WVA pre-existed, based on support over the previous decade of WVA through various charity events involving the Australian cricket team both domestically and internationally. As with the Sydney Opera House concert, WVA were not directly involved in the planning, staging or production of this event. Its role was limited to being the sole beneficiary of all funds raised of both ticket sales and associated fund-raising on the day and follow-up events, such as auctioning the uniforms and other memorabilia, etc of participating players and officials. During this time, publicly-listed companies as well as private philanthropists were beginning to feel pressure (both from their own employees and shareholders and the general public) and began making large donations. Kerry Packer’s personal $3 million donation announced during the MCG cricket match was the largest individual donation though others also donated significant sums, such as Dick Pratt’s donation of $1 million. By this stage, WVA had received $38 million and began to discuss the continued appropriateness of being the sole NGO associated with these large national events. WVA suggested to Channel 9 that perhaps a second large NGO might be involved in the MCG cricket match. Channel 9 declined this offer, again stating that an exclusive focus would maximise donations by minimising confusion within the general public.
The Concert and Cricket Match (8 January and 10 January)

The World Vision *Reach out for Asia* concert was held on the steps of the Sydney Opera House on January 8, 2006. Over $20 million was raised during the concert and associated telethon carried live all major commercial television stations and a number of FM radio stations. Between 6.30 pm on January 8 to 3.00 am on January 9, 160,677 calls were received and 8019 web transactions completed. Two days later, on 10 January the *Asia vs. World Cricket Match* was played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Over $14 million dollars was raised during the game. Between 3.00 pm on 10 January and 3.00 on 11 January 25,600 calls were received and 1,687 web transactions completed.

**SUMMARY**

WVA raised over $111.3 million in its Asian Tsunami Appeal. This level of public support was unprecedented. Direct fundraising expenses were also negligible as WVA was the exclusive recipient of a number of large-scale, externally conceived and produced fundraising events. In past WVA fundraising campaign, around 90% of support comes from preexisting supporters. This clearly did not occur with the Asian Tsunami Appeal, with the majority of support coming from first time donors. During the first two weeks following the tsunami, the Marketing Department worked closely with the Relief Team. Due to the ‘organic’ response of the public, the Marketing Department was able to concentrate on primarily disseminating information to various media outlets rather than spending resources seeking to raise public awareness (as with most relief fundraising appeals). However, the manner in which the funds were raised had the effect of giving prominence to WVA within the public sphere almost to the full exclusion of other NGOs seeking to raise funds from the Australian public. In the final week of December 2004, following the tsunami, WVA was specifically mentioned in print media that had a combined circulation of 2,081,995. In January this figure increased to 9,561,169. In relation to the World Vision *Reach out for Asia* concert, WVA was mentioned in media with a circulation of 1,887,258. Whilst the circulation of media mentioning WVA in relation to the *Asia vs. The World Cricket Match* was 9,552,807.

**THE IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSE**

WVA’s programming response was almost as immediate as its fundraising response. Expectations of the impact the programming response should have on those affected by the tsunami also grew in line with the amount of funds being raised. Given the amount finally raised, expectations were thus significant. Within days of the Asian Tsunami, an international relief effort was in operation with over 200 international NGOs (WVA among them) and many more local NGOs providing assistance. In fact, the response required outstripped most NGOs staffing capacity, resulting in many ‘non-relief’ staff being deployed on short notice without experience or training. It should be noted though that the number of dedicated NGO workers (whether relief specialist or not) were outnumbered many times over – in the initial
phases of the response at least – by surviving members of the local communities, local government officials, as well as expatriates offering their assistance (including those who had being holidaying in the affected areas or travelled to the affected areas expressly to offer support). However, unlike the surviving members of local communities, local government officials, and expatriates offering assistance, NGO deployed staff were responsible for extremely large and well-funded relief interventions, including food distribution, medical care, temporary camps, and provision of other needs for those affected. The responsibilities carried by NGO staff were therefore significant.

There is a developing body of literature on the failures and successes of the programming response to the tsunami. These evaluations tend to be either official reports concerning matters of donor funding expenditure, infrastructure and material development and general statistical analyses or reports and articles written and produced by NGOs themselves that discuss their own specific programs (for example, ActionAid 2006; Oxfam International, 2006; UNDP, 2006; Caritas Australia, 2005; Brennan and Rimba, 2005; Doocy et al, 2006). Having noted its fundraising activities of WVA, this section reports on the experiences of 21 ‘non-relief’ staff deployed to tsunami-affected areas by WVA for short periods of time. Using a qualitative research methodology, it distils a number of issues that constrained the capacity of these staff to respond optimally. In this regard, it provides the chance to learn from the extreme circumstances unleashed by the tsunami and therefore the opportunity to improve responses to future CHEs.

The Unique Perspective of Short-Term, Non-Relief Specialists

There is limited qualitative research within the literature that is concerned specifically with the organisational responses of international NGOs to CHEs (see Trice 2003 for a summary). This current research is also unusual in that it focuses on the experiences of staff who undertook short-term assignments only. The few previous studies undertaken (see; Cardozo and Salama 2002; De Haan 1994; Eriksson et al. 2001) have focussed on the experiences of staff in longer-term appointments in humanitarian emergencies with a particular focus on the stress and trauma faced by these workers. Rather than being introspective, the purpose of this particular study was to gauge experiences of external factors, such as organizational governance and staffing procedures. This external focus is valid though as the literature indicates that it is largely these factors that impact on personal stress and trauma (Fawcett 2003).

WVA deployed twenty-six staff to tsunami affected areas between January to September 2005 in total and twenty-one were interviewed for this study. Approximately half of the participants had been involved in relief work prior to the tsunami, but were not classified as ‘relief-specialists’, the others had been recruited from elsewhere in the organisation or were short-term consultants employed by the organisation. These staff identified three main issues that affected their capacity to respond optimally: 1) governance at relief operation sites; 2) infrastructure and implementation of systems; and 3) selection of deployed staff and their preparation and support. These findings find resonance in similar evaluations undertaken for this and previous international responses to CHEs (see Telford and Crosgrave 2006, and Borton and Brusset 1996 on the Rwandan experience).
Who’s the Boss?

Staff clearly identified the importance of organisational governance to their ability to respond effectively. This emphasis is not unexpected as ‘the available evidence clearly demonstrates that aid workers assign most causes of stress to organisational factors such as team relationships, leadership, clarity of mission objectives, and agency structure’ (Fawcett 2003, p. 135). As part of an international partnership, the Australian staff was working with counterparts from both the local national offices as well as from the international partnership office. Not knowing clearly who was in charge impacted on their ability to respond effectively. For instance, decisions made by one person could be over-turned by another, leaving staff feeling very confused and frustrated. In some instances, staff reported having to work to several supervisors. For example, one interviewee stated

‘you’ll be working with one person and then come to an agreement and then somebody else will come in and say, that’s not important... you work with the relief manager or the IT manager and make a decision and then run with that, assume that’s what been done and then find out a day or two later that ... (a more senior manager) has come in and said, “no, we can’t do that” for whatever reason.’

Another interviewee reported added: ‘[I was] there working in the local team in an emergency capacity so I had a local boss but then I had a regional boss and then I also had an international boss, so it was confusing.’ In other cases, instead of multiple bosses, there was seemingly no boss and a lack of formal leadership. An interviewed staff member found that his first week in Aceh was highly unproductive because ‘it was just too unclear who was responsible for what in that particular area.’ Stable leadership, agreed reporting structures and delegation of authority is important in effective relief interventions.

What Do I Have and How Do I Get What I Need?

Interviewed staff reported difficulties in accessing basic infrastructure early in the response and not having in place standard systems that would facilitate their work. These systems and strategies were of two kinds: first, a general organisational plan put in place at times of disaster to deal with immediate ways of working and, second, the strategies developed to deal with both the local crisis circumstances and over time. Central to difficulties early in the tsunami response and critical to both general plans and also specific localised responses were the lack of basic equipment and infrastructure to respond effectively. These problems were more acute in Aceh than Sri Lanka. As one interviewee responded,

“In Aceh, it was more difficult because of the lack of infrastructure... I was certainly surprised that the first plane load didn’t have satellite dishes so that we could get satellite broadband... and a range of other systems that I would have thought pretty common across a category 3 disaster”.

This interviewee concluded that ‘when you can’t get internet and access to some of that sort of stuff weeks after the disaster, then there’s something wrong’. However these concerns
must be viewed in light of the overall destruction caused by the tsunami. Expectations of broadband internet access, for example, may be naive when whole towns have been destroyed. But the lack of infrastructure support did negatively impact efforts to establish temporary regional offices.

Concerns were also expressed about certain organisational systems that were being implemented and their usefulness in such extreme conditions. In particular, several interviewed staff indicated that ‘Some of the processes that they put in place were not relevant to a relief situation’. Another staff member similarly highlighted that accountability systems which might be appropriate in a development situation, simply hindered his work in Aceh by noting that:

“The Jakarta staff were wonderful people but their mind was in development mode, their mind was saying ‘well, we normally get three quotes. Can you nick down the street and get three quotes?’... then you go down and get three quotes and the finance people would say ‘hang on one of these quotes is not for the same item, you’ve got to go and get it again’.

Am I Ready to Go?

Many large international NGOs have dedicated relief specialists on standby for immediate deployment to CHEs. Yet the size of the tsunami required a greater human resources response than just these staff. Deploying ‘non-relief’ staff was therefore necessary, but also very urgent. Interviewed staff acknowledged that the timing of the tsunami (people were away or otherwise on holidays over Christmas and New Year) hampered their organisation’s capacity to provide appropriate briefings. It was apparent however, that there were also inconsistencies in the level of information different staff members were provided with; some were provided with a reasonable level of background information prior to leaving Australia, others reported that they went without any briefings. More importantly, staff members highlighted the importance of having a briefing session in the field or being able to talk to someone who had just left the field as crucial background to being able to ‘hit the ground running’. In particular, some staff stressed the importance of briefing around cross-cultural awareness. For example, one interviewed staff, who represented the views of many noted:

“When we are going into a country it is their operations we are going into... these guys have their own constitutional agreement, their own board and suddenly the tsunami comes and the tsunami brings with it a tsunami of foreigners and, at one point of time, we were from fifteen different countries... one has to recognise that we are going into a completely different culture, different sensitivities have to be followed and to be aware of those sensitivities, cultural protocols, the tensions, the social political expectations”.

The extent to which emotional support and debriefing in the field were provided by the organisation also seemed to vary. One interviewed staff member suggested that it would certainly have improved his experience if such support had been more formalised. Importantly, he noted that for someone with less experience than himself in relief situations,
this would be essential to their coping in what would always be a trying environment. Another said that, while he did not feel unsupported, it was mostly his own personal resources of having had previous experience of working in these kinds of circumstances that got him through. But the question that remains unanswered is “why send inexperienced staff in such a complex situation in the first place?”

In contrast, other team members described themselves as having been well supported organisationally during their time in tsunami-affected areas. Members of the team of consultant engineers who went to Sri Lanka also acknowledged that they had been well-supported, both logistically and by having systems in place to speak with each other and through a mid-term briefing with their team leader.

If it Ever Happens Again...

Whilst the size of the tsunami was unprecedented in terms of geographical spread and devastation, the issues reported by the interviewed staff (governance, systems and preparation) are relevant to any large-scale CHE and therefore are relevant to any NGO undertaking relief operations. Given the prominent role NGOs have in implementing relief interventions (on behalf of bi- and multi-lateral donors as well as using their own publicly raised funds) it is incumbent on these organisations to consistently seek to improve the capacity of their own staff to respond effectively to CHEs. Hopefully, a CHE of similar size to the tsunami will not occur again. But such wishful thinking is not sufficient in itself. International NGOs must be prepared for the worse and listen to the experiences of those who have seen the worst first hand. No doubt this is occurring and NGOs will continue to focus on how to improve the capacity of their staff for the future. Hopefully this attempt to amplify the voices of short-term non-relief specialists will assist these important efforts.

CONCLUSION

The Asian Tsunami was a disaster, thankfully unprecedented in recent times. The public response was also unprecedented. WVA was favourably placed to receive a large portion of public funds raised due to the exclusive relationships it formed with key media, banking and other commercial organisations. The reason provided by these organisations was to present a single entity to the general public to avoid confusion, a sense of competitiveness amongst fundraising NGOs, thus avoided dilution of support. The WVA Marketing Department managed relationships effectively and efficiently in a very intense environment. It is likely that the actions of the Marketing Department will have positive flow-on consequences for future fundraising campaigns. It is important that this other role played by NGOs is considered when analysing the effectiveness of aid. The literature is yet to fully incorporate this new role of managing relationships played by marketing departments in fundraising campaigns. It is no longer about eliciting donations based on guilt, but providing information and opportunities for the general public to respond to an increasingly localised world. This leads to more effective fundraising – which is one role of NGOs.
The other role of NGOs is programming. The programming response to the tsunami was undertaken in trying circumstances. Given the size of the destruction and devastation, WVA, like other NGOs, faced many difficulties in implementing activities in the most efficient manner. Three main issues important in responding effectively are: 1) governance at relief operation sites; 2) infrastructure and implementation of systems; and 3) selection of deployed staff and their preparation and support. Such issues have been reported by other organisations during large CHEs. Thus, before NGOs can effectively spend the money, they need to effectively raise funds. This case study suggests that agencies such as WVA are able to undertake both with varying levels of success.

REFERENCES


