

TEC Recommendations: An Emerging Method for Institutional Compliance



From an Effort to Turn Local Tsunami Recovery into Regional Disaster Risk Reduction for the Poor



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Editorial Advisors:

Dr. Ian Davis
Cranfield University, UK

Kala Peiris De Costa
Siyath Foundation, Sri Lanka

Khurshid Alam
International Tsunami Programme
ActionAid International, Dhaka

Madhavi Malalgoda Ariyabandu
Intermediate Technology Development
Group (ITDG) – South Asia, Sri Lanka

Mihir R. Bhatt
All India Disaster Mitigation Institute,
India

Dr. Rita Schneider – Sliwa
Basel University, Switzerland

Dr. Satchit Balsari, MD, MPH
The University Hospital of Columbia
and Cornell, New York

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KEY IDEA

Promoting the Quality of Aid: Sharing Good Principles and Practice

Working with Mihir R. Bhatt of AIDMI on an evaluation of the tsunami response for the Disasters Emergency Committee, a UK-based consortium of the main international NGOs, I began to be alarmed by the unprecedented scale. From the start aid managers were under intense pressure to achieve profile and to spend funds fast. It was a highly competitive environment in which too much money was chasing after too few opportunities. The result, as measured by the TEC evaluations, was a lot of duplication and inefficiency, poor coordination and quantity rather than quality in specific projects.

As editor for the TEC Capacities evaluation, I saw how negative the consequences were. Immediately after the disaster, aid agencies sent out large expatriate teams, often drawn from other operations around the world. As money was no object (indeed, the object was to spend money) goods were flown across the world even though they might be available locally. Even water was sent by airfreight.

Because of the rush, there was little chance to engage with local organisations. In some cases, agencies flew in so many expatriates that they did not need local support. In others, they hastily made contracts for local organisations to implement their pre-conceived programmes. There was even less time for consultation with local communities. Any organisation that consulted would soon find itself pushed aside by another organisation ready to bring in larger volumes of goods with fewer questions.

Managers in the aid agencies may have felt uneasy about this but perhaps argued to themselves that there would be time for consultation later, in the 'recovery' phase. But having lost the trust of local organisations and communities during the relief phase, 'recovery' never really got going and the response remained top-down, based on shallow relationships and understanding, and driven largely by money.

The TEC process has led to a number of proposals to promote the quality of aid. AIDMI has played an important role in pioneering these recommendations. At the very least, these benchmarks will make agencies aware when quality is under threat. Whether this will be strong enough to challenge the impetus of another Tsunami Disaster may be doubtful. But in most disasters there is more scope to assert good principles and practice. It is in the response to the smaller, everyday disasters, that the benefit of quality may be greatest. ■

Tony Vaux
Humanitarian Activities, UK

Basically TEC – A Summary¹

Eight weeks after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, a group of predominantly humanitarian agencies met in Geneva to discuss a sector-wide joint evaluation to maximise learning from the Tsunami response, resulting in the founding of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC).

TEC is a multi-agency learning and accountability initiative in the humanitarian sector. It is the first major system-wide humanitarian evaluation since the sector evaluated its performance in Rwanda in the mid-1990s. The TEC was managed by a Core Management Group (CMG) consisting of agencies such as AIDMI, IFRC, UNDP, WHO, etc.

The TEC's main objectives were, first, to improve the quality of humanitarian action, including linkages to longer term recovery and development; second, to provide accountability to the donors and affected-country populations on the overall tsunami response; and third, to test the TEC approach as a possible model for future joint evaluation.

Often, post-disaster evaluations focus on one agency's performance. Moreover, the results of those evaluations are often not made public, but rather kept within the agency or sector. Objectivity is not always guaranteed.

The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition aimed to assess the sector-wide

performance, rather than that of individual agency's during the tsunami response. The focus of the reports was on the systemic, policy level rather than the programming level.

The five themes of the TEC reports are:

- Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities
- Links between relief, rehabilitation, and development in the tsunami response
- The role of needs assessment in the tsunami response
- Funding the tsunami response
- Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries

The Synthesis Report gives the overall conclusions of the five thematic evaluations. These conclusions are:

- The tsunami again highlighted the **importance of local and national actors** in the response to sudden-onset natural disasters.
- Humanitarian response needs to be **more transparent and**

"Meetings like these are steps towards critical self-reflection of an institution's orientation. It opens the possibilities of constructive dialogue, a way to improve."

Tommy Reynolds

accountable to affected populations, and thus donor citizens, and not focus on brand and spin.

- It also highlighted the grossly **disproportionate, inequitable, short-termist, non-transparent, and uneven nature of funding** for emergencies and the consequent lack of surge capacity.
- Agencies need to support **local recovery strategies** rather than agency agendas.
- Donors need to fund **capacity development** at all levels to **reduce disaster risks and improve preparedness and response**.

From the thematic evaluation and its own experiences, TEC has selected four principal recommendations to improve future disaster response activities. These recommendations for the humanitarian sector are:

- The Humanitarian system needs a **fundamental reorientation** from supplying aid to facilitating communities' own relief and recovery priorities.
- Increase **disaster response capacities** and improve coherence, including that of affected country actors.
- Establish **accreditation/certification system**.
- Ensure **funding systems are** impartial, more efficient, flexible, transparent, and aligned with good donorship principles.



¹ Source: Telford, J, and J Cosgrave (2006) *Joint Evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami: Synthesis Report*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

The TEC Reports – An Overview

TEC Report	Overall objective	Examples of key recommendations
<i>Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities</i>	To determine the impact of the tsunami response, primarily the role of international actors, on local and national capacities for: 1. relief and recovery and 2. risk reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aid should be given according to need rather than being limited to a particular disaster. In the case of the tsunami, people affected by conflict should be included in aid responses. • Support communities to develop their own contingency plans for disasters and receive material support on the basis that adequate provision must be made for poorer and marginalised groups.
<i>Links between relief, rehabilitation, and development in the tsunami response</i>	To find out how the operations and roles of the various actors were governed by ideas and practices regarding the linking of relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD), and to assess what consequences those ideas, practices, and subsequent actions have had or may in future have for the affected populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LRRD must be more firmly rooted in national and local contexts and processes. • More consideration needs to be given to reducing risks of natural disasters, and anchoring such strategies within national structures of social protection.
<i>The role of needs assessment in the tsunami response</i>	This report evaluates the adequacy, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the assessment of need in the first three months after the tsunami. It focuses on the impact of assessment on the response of international agencies and institutional donors and, ultimately, on the affected populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors and agencies should continue investing in early, high quality needs assessment for livelihood recovery. • Adopt a cash-based response when possible. • Transferring the power of decision making back to the affected populations will alleviate the need for thematic assessment by outsiders.
<i>Funding the tsunami response</i>	To provide an overview of the funding of the response by the various actors, and to assess the appropriateness of the allocation of funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All agencies should commit to making the full versions of programme evaluations publicly available as a matter of principle. • The coordinated use of cash grants and loans provided through existing institutions needs to be evaluated as a potentially more effective way of funding recovery and reconstruction than direct implementation by international and national agencies.
<i>Coordination of international humanitarian assistance in tsunami-affected countries</i>	This evaluation focuses on the efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and appropriateness of coordination arrangements within the international humanitarian system and how this relates to national government and non-governmental agents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective, consistent and coordinated communication with recipient populations at all stages of the response—including a concerted effort to involve women in the dialogue- should be prioritised. • Civil-military coordination should be improved through more extensive promotion of guidelines, principles, and procedures.

Why Do a Self-Assessment on TEC Findings?

When, in February 2005, the humanitarian sector initiated the joint evaluation of the tsunami response, one of the main aims was "to improve the quality of humanitarian action, including linkages to longer term recovery and development."²

The findings and recommendations from the Synthesis Report clearly point to some of the systemic deficiencies in the humanitarian sector's collective response capacity. Susanne Frueh, Chair of the TEC Core Management Group, urges "all stakeholders in the humanitarian enterprise to seriously consider the findings and recommendations contained in [the synthesis] report, and to move toward a more effective and appropriate humanitarian response system."³

The TEC reports are a clear indication of the collective desire of the humanitarian community to work together to share and learn from their experiences in order to continue to improve future performance. The process has also demonstrated a shared commitment to be both transparent and accountable.

The need to know how an organisation works in totality requires motivation to create a self-critical learning culture. Learning has much to do with the attitudes of leaders/managers, their degree of personal security and an understanding of how they can be most effective.⁴

The system-wide effort of TEC gives a powerful mandate for institutional



All photographs in this issue: AIDMI

Pallavi Rathod and Pallab Paul discussing the TEC reports. Critical and unbiased discussion of an agency's work will stimulate improvement in the agency's response operations.

reforms. An assessment of an agency's compliance with the TEC reports, if done well, can be very valuable, not only for the agency, but also for its disaster response (and thus its beneficiaries), as well as setting an example for other humanitarian agencies.

Transparency in internal and external dealings, and the willingness to admit failings when they occur, help achieve real partnerships. It is

"All AIDMI team members learned more about the TEC reports during the Annual Meeting. The exercises were very helpful and made all team members understand and remember the TEC issues."

Krupali Panchal

important to demonstrate your ability to learn from what you are doing, and to challenge donors to do the same.⁵ TEC gives us the tools for this. ■

Reasons to (self-) Assess:

- Improve disaster response and humanitarian action in general
- Accountability towards affected community, donors and own team
- Improve internal efficiency, structure and programming
- Set example for other humanitarian actors
- Show ability to change

2 Telford, J, and J Cosgrave (2006) *Joint Evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami: Synthesis Report*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.

3 Ibid, p 6

4 Fowler, A. *Striking a Balance. A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organisations in International Development*. Earthscan, London, 1997. p 172

5 Ibid, p 110

TEC: Change in Theory

Change within an organisation may not be easy to achieve. Making the decision to assess an agency's TEC compliance, however, is a big step towards change. The TEC reports themselves give some clues about the difficulties of change.

TEC recognises the difficulties of a fundamental reorientation for several reasons⁶. First, it will involve a change in the organisational culture of humanitarian aid providers. Organisational cultures become embedded in the policies and processes that organisations use, and in the belief systems of their managers. Organisational mandates may reflect the organisational culture (but they may also reflect a previous organisational culture rather than the current one). Agencies may need to change their mandate and mission to reorient themselves to ownership by the affected population. The minimum requirements for organisation change are, according to TEC:

- its championing at board level;
- operational staff who believe that such change is necessary; and
- pressure for change from the organisation's environment.

Second, this change requires that agencies cede power to the affected population. Humanitarian agencies have power through the resources they control. They often justify their reluctance to cede this power to the community with the concern that a community-owned response may be unfair. The TEC studies show the same objections can be made about agency-owned processes in the tsunami response.



Aparna Shah, Annu D'Souza, Jayesh Parmar and Kalpesh Prajapati in discussion. One of the requirements for change is an operational team that understands the need for change.

Third, it was clear in the tsunami response that different levels of government sometimes had different priorities and policies. Agencies can address this problem by promoting distributed ownership, with the community and different levels of government owning different levels of the response. However, it is recognised that this can be difficult and time-consuming to achieve.

Achieving ownership by the population will not be easy. It demands that agencies not only have the technical skills for interventions, but also the sociological skills for engaging with communities and knowing when to walk away. Nevertheless, the potential advantages offered by ownership by the affected population, including more effective, appropriate and

sustainable aid, should be deemed to outweigh the difficulties.

Some see humanitarian action as relieving the distress of the affected population without addressing the underlying causes. However, Article Nine of the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct states that 'relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.'⁷ The TEC Capacities Study links ownership by the affected population with reducing the risk of future disasters: 'Only when vulnerable people take control of their environment will they escape from vulnerability.'⁸

In order to change our collective humanitarian response, we should use the TEC recommendations to help us assess our own humanitarian work. ■

6 Cosgrave, J. *Synthesis Report: Expanded Summary. Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, January 2007.

7 IFRC. *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in disaster relief*. Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1997.

8 Telford, J, J Cosgrave and R Houghton. *Joint Evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami: Synthesis Report*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, 2006.

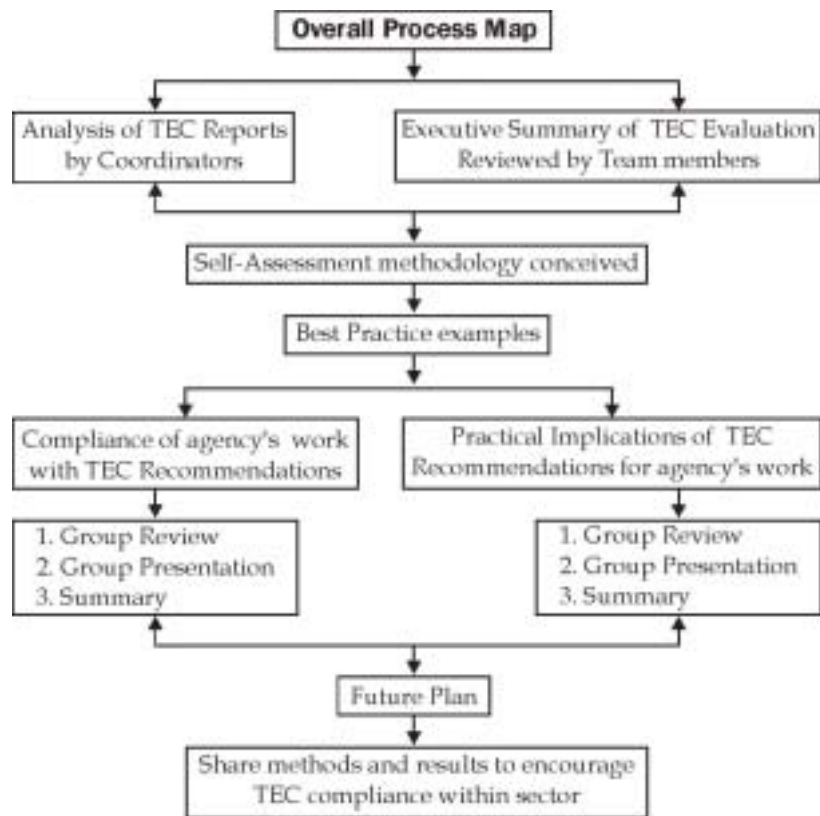
Sharing Experiences: The How-to of a TEC Self-Assessment

Since TEC recommends that agencies share experiences from the past, AIDMI wants to share its experiences in organising and executing a TEC compliance self-assessment for the benefit of other organisations.

What AIDMI did

AIDMI chose to devote its 'Annual Meeting' to the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition reports in order to spread awareness of the TEC recommendations among its employees. AIDMI recognised the importance of TEC compliance and wished to assess its activities in the light of TEC. The chart shows the chronological order of the events before, during and after AIDMI's self-assessment.

The Annual Meeting was successful in improving TEC awareness among employees. An overview of AIDMI's activities during the annual meeting is given in the table below.



AIDMI's Annual Meeting Activities					
Activity	Day 1	Purpose	Activity	Day 2	Purpose
Overview of objectives		Give direction, stress importance of TEC findings, and encourage participants to be critical	Quiz: TEC facts and figures		Bringing participants in direct contact with the reports; learning more about the TEC reports, and the recommendations and findings; learning to understand the structure of the TEC reports; creating a fun learning atmosphere
Introduction to the TEC reports		Informing participants of the TEC findings and recommendations; explaining importance and value of TEC for AIDMI's work			
Presentations by representatives from AIDMI's activities about best practices		All participants gained insight into AIDMI's activities in other fields so comparison to TEC is easier.	Group work 2: Matching AIDMI with recommendations from the four areas of conclusion, followed by group presentations		Ranking the most relevant TEC recommendations for AIDMI; judging AIDMI's compliance with separate recommendations. Also, sharing and critically discussing each group's findings
Group work 1: Matching AIDMI with recommendations from the five TEC reports, followed by group presentations		Ranking the most relevant TEC recommendations for AIDMI; judging AIDMI's compliance with separate recommendations. Also, sharing and critically discussing each group's findings.	Directions for Future and way ahead		Summarise results of TEC compliance self-assessment; indicate what the next step will be

In order to allow other organisations to learn from AIDMI's annual meeting, the lessons learned from the Annual Meeting are described below as well as in the articles discussing the details of the TEC quiz and group assignments. ■

Organising a Step-by-Step Self-Assessment

Information and Participation

Information and participation are key to ensure the most effective use of a TEC compliance self-assessment. Without first informing participants of the contents of the TEC report, a self-assessment has little value given the participants are unable to compare the agency's work with TEC. On the other hand, simply informing participants of the TEC's contents will not bring out new information. A combination of information and participation ensures that the agency's work can be assessed against the TEC recommendations.

Information can be given in the form of pre-assessment reading assignments, or – perhaps more effectively – in the form of a presentation during the assessment itself. The amount of information required depends on the group's previous knowledge of the TEC findings, but should include the history and purpose of TEC; a summary of the findings of the thematic reports and the synthesis report; the main TEC recommendations; and its relevance for the agency and the sector.

Individual or group assignments can be helpful to encourage participation. Group work is a great way to ensure the participants can benefit from each other's experience. Forming mixed groups encourages discussion between people from different areas within the agency, encouraging critical thinking and agency-wide understanding of each department's TEC compliance. Group presentations can be used to share each group's findings, not only to inform the other groups, but also to critically discuss the group's opinions.



Arpita Chhatrapati, Sibylle Bihr from Switzerland and Prakashan K. K. doing group work. Group work encourages in-depth discussion and critical thinking.

Supporting objectivity and criticism

Objectivity may not be easy to achieve but every attempt should be made to ensure that employees think about the agency's and their own work critically. While presentations from participants about their department's activities can give some interesting insights into the agency's TEC compliance, they may not encourage objectivity in participants.

One danger is that the TEC findings are modified or interpreted to fit the agency's existing policies. This may be prevented by a thorough understanding of TEC, and by an open atmosphere that encourages criticism.

The participants may also feel obliged to give overly positive answers. This should be discouraged, and questions should be asked in such a way they do not just encourage yes-or-no answers, but allow for in-between answers. For example, the agency's compliance with TEC could

be rated with different levels to allow for varied answers describing some, but not total compliance with TEC recommendations.

Employees should be encouraged to speak out and challenge existing policies. Enthusiasm and openness towards criticism on the part of senior management will help prevent 'safety answers'- employees providing the positive answers that management may be perceived to be looking for.

One way of creating a lively, fun atmosphere that encourages participation is to include a quiz and/or similar games. This will make the occasion seem more informal, encouraging livelier discussion and a freer atmosphere.

Objectivity and criticism are extremely important and should receive much attention during preparation as well as execution of a self-assessment. ■

From Self-Assessment to Change Within the Agency and the Sector

When an agency has assessed its own TEC compliance, further steps should be taken to use the results for change, both within the agency and the humanitarian sector.

Within the agency

The results of the assessment should be used to reform the parts of the organisation that require change. It is easy to forget that assessment alone is not enough. The results should be communicated across the agency so that they can be implemented in all activities.

Van de Putte¹⁰ has found that reports, of variable readability and length, are the favored means of communication for evaluating results. However, experience shows that reports are not widely read. The dissemination of evaluation findings is therefore limited. Attempts are being made to complement reports with debriefing meetings or seminars to promote discussion about the findings of the evaluation. It is believed that this helps to reinforce the message. Another option is to use intranet and internet to distribute findings within the agency and to the public, increasing transparency.

Disseminating the results of a self-assessment does not guarantee change within an agency. A commitment to change at all levels is needed to implement the findings in an agency's work. Three types of misuse and non-use of evaluations are listed by ALNAP (see box).

Van Brabant's study (ALNAP, 1997)¹² describes a number of other obstacles

First Steps⁹

The NGO Impact Initiative suggested that agencies undertake an audit of their accountability to affected populations. This is a good place to start. Such an audit by all agencies (and not just NGOs) can highlight some of the issues that agencies need to address in their own work, in order to begin the reorientation the TEC studies call for.

However, leadership for sustainable change has to come from the top. Agency boards, trustees or other governing bodies of the Red Cross, NGOs, Donors, and UN agencies need to:

- Decide which of the TEC recommendations they accept; and
- Set up a process at board level to oversee the agency's progress towards implementing the accepted recommendations.

Only by involving governing bodies in this way can we bring about the changes needed to improve the quality and efficiency of the humanitarian response system.

Types of Non-use or Misuse of Evaluations¹¹

(These different uses and misuses are not mutually exclusive. Components of the same evaluation can lead to a mixture of uses at different times, partly related to the nature of the findings and partly to the users. Different users will select how, and if, they use the findings according to their position, power and interests.)

Ritual use

Evaluations serve a purely symbolic purpose, representing a desirable organisational quality such as accountability. Evaluations are a formality and 'use' equates with the fulfilment of legal or institutional obligations, rather than of the evaluation findings.

Mis-use

Suppressing, subverting, misrepresenting or distorting findings; coopting evaluators to serve a biased agenda for political reasons or personal advantage. Rejecting findings because they do not correspond with the beliefs of key stakeholders or with decisions already taken (such as to cease funding).

Non-use

The evaluation is ignored because users find little or no value in the findings (a rational response to a lack of quality or relevance), are not aware of the results (dissemination problem), or the context has changed dramatically (e.g. evacuation; unexpected closure of a programme).

to organisational learning: power structures and poor "centralisation and hierarchy, internal information management... having

9 Cosgrave, J. *Synthesis Report: Expanded Summary. Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami*. London: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, January 2007

10 Van de Putte, Bert. *Follow-up to evaluations of humanitarian programmes. Findings of the ALNAP Commissioned Study*. ALNAP, 2001.

11 Mitchell, John ea. *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action*. Overseas Development Institute, London, 2006. Pages 96/97

12 ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action. Page 112

to live up to the false image that development and relief are quick and easy, the temptation to hype up one's performance in the face of growing competition between agencies, the financial instability of certainly (*sic*) humanitarian aid agencies, caused by a trend to go for cheap growth driven by short term funding and unrealistically low overheads, and the high degree of job insecurity of many staff."

Some organisational characteristics likely to enhance the follow-up to an evaluation are :¹³

- Willingness to learn from past experience and the capacity to include that learning in future program responses
- Positive management attitudes
- Clearer structures of responsibility

Some factors that are likely to constrain a follow-up are¹⁴:

- Lack of a "champion" to guide it through distribution, meetings, "after actions" and other follow-ups
- Once a report is finalised, there is not enough discussion and interaction with the staff concerned on how they intend to implement some of the



Titis Primita from Indonesia, Pradeep Vyas and Mehul Pandya share results from their group's self-assessment.

TEC Recommendations: Changes within Agencies

TEC Part of Rec 1, 5.2.2, p114 Synthesis Report

International agencies should improve global disaster risk reduction by systematising learning from successful experience and practice from the field. Research is needed to capture replicable examples.

TEC Sub-rec, p75 Coordination Report

Simply incorporating human-rights language into program documents does not ensure a human-rights-based approach in disaster response. A process of learning and education on human rights is also needed. Policy mechanisms should be in place to ensure strict adherence to human rights during program implementation, and all policies should include specific measures for the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups.

TEC Recommendation 2, p117 and part of Rec 2, 5.3.1 p117 Synthesis Report

All actors should strive to increase and review periodically their disaster response capacities. They should seek to improve the linkages and coherence between themselves and other actors in the international disaster response system, including those from the affected countries themselves

- recommendations and overcome constraints
- Mix of factors including organisational priorities, resources, perceived importance of the evaluation
- Lack of time among the staff as well as staff capacity and knowledge
- The organisation and people involved are not prepared for changes

- Lack of understanding and appreciation of the role of evaluation in improving the programming/management of humanitarian operations
- Rapid staff turn over, lack of investment in creating institutional memory, a belief that evaluation is just to please donors.

If an agency wants to implement the changes that were deemed necessary during the self-assessment, it needs to be prepared to address any of the issues above. Reviewing these obstacles before designing an organisational self-review may be a step in the right direction.

"The Annual Meeting gave us an opportunity to learn and share experiences and different points of view from the field, policy, and decision-making levels."

Vishal Pathak

13 Van de Putte, Bert. *Follow-up to evaluations of humanitarian programmes. Findings of the ALNAP Commissioned Study*. ALNAP, 2001. Page 14

14 Van de Putte Page 15

Within the humanitarian sector

If the TEC reports are to achieve their full potential impact, agencies should not only reform their own policies. It is important to encourage other agencies to use the TEC reports to assess their own performance, and to help them by sharing experiences in implementing TEC.

This can be done through communicating the methods used, results from and difficulties encountered during the agency's own self-assessment to other humanitarian actors, as a stimulant for self-assessment and to give others the benefit of the agency's experience.

Through sector-wide and agency-wide changes - for example, including TEC in agency's mission, mandate and/or vision and training and through initiatives to advocate TEC implementation - the whole of the humanitarian sector may be stimulated to apply TEC recommendations to its current activities and to ensure that they are automatically included in future activities.

A global accreditation system

One of the changes within the sector that are proposed by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition is the development of a global accreditation system.

(Rec 3, p120 Synthesis Report)

"The international relief system should establish an accreditation and certification system to distinguish agencies that work to a professional standard in a particular sector."

This accreditation system would then allow donors to be more selective in their choice of which organisations to fund:

(Rec 1, p15 Coordination Report)

An international review and consultation should be undertaken with NGOs to develop new approaches to achieving: the extent to which a certification process can

A Global Accreditation System	
Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Quality in disaster response as a prerequisite for funding	To be effective, procedures and accreditation should be the same in all countries
Potential system of coordination, cooperation and coherence in the humanitarian sector	Regulation possibly seen as subjective, favoring large NGOs since the frameworks used to accredit agencies come from larger NGOs
Promotion of systems of accountability and internal change within sector and agencies	Unbiased information on an agency's activities may be difficult to find
More control over and transparency in the flow of funding	Possibility that attempts will be made to get around the accreditation system illegally
If well-executed, smaller NGOs that work effectively will be able to draw in more funding on the basis of merit, given they will no longer be outshone by larger NGOs	If not well-executed, smaller NGOs may have more difficulty in receiving accreditation, and may receive no funding even if they work effectively.
	Informal response systems cannot, and probably should not, be accredited

be introduced to assist governments and donors in choosing responsible NGO partners with whom to work.

This accreditation system should then assess to what extent agencies comply with recommendations from TEC, the Red Cross code, etc:

Rec 16, 6.4.3, p65 Needs Assessment Report

Technical capacity to assess needs and /or commitments to implement programs based on evidence should be one of the criteria in the accreditation of humanitarian NGOs as proposed by some donors.

Financial transparency and flexibility would be improved with this accreditation system. It would be

"If all team members are able to think critically and express their opinion freely, and if management is open-minded and self-critical, these assessments can help change the way an organisation works."

Ineke van de Donk

easier for donors and the public to make an informed decision on where funds should go:

Conclusion 5, Lesson 3, p43 Funding Report

An accreditation system for financial accounting and reporting should be established that uses standard formats and definitions, and includes full compliance with FTS and DAD [or something similar]. Once established, donors should only give support to accredited agencies (UN, NGOs and RC Movement). This would encourage the public to do the same.

Some of the potential positive and negative aspects of a global accreditation system are listed in the box above. The accreditation system may help bring more coordination and accountability to the sector, if special attention is paid to the negative aspects that might occur. For example, smaller NGOs should have an equal chance of accreditation on the basis of their work, so that they are encouraged to produce quality disaster response. ■

Self-Assessment Tools:

I. Group Exercises

To involve its whole team in the process of assessing its TEC compliance, AIDMI planned two group exercises for its self-assessment. A description of the process and results of the group exercises is given below.



Manish Patel, Kalpesh Prajapati and Sanchit Oza find that there is a danger of oversimplification and adaptation of the recommendations; however, there are ways to minimise the risk.

For the first group exercise, the participants were divided into five groups, one for each of the thematic TEC reports (Needs Assessment, LRRD, Funding, Capacities, and Coordination). Each group was given a list of the most important recommendations from their TEC report and asked to rate AIDMI's compliance with each recommendation with A, B, or C, or a combination. Recommendations were rated A if AIDMI already implemented those recommendations in its work; B if the recommendations were not imple-

mented, and C if they *should* be implemented. The groups were asked to give at least two examples of how AIDMI applied each recommendation.

The purpose of this exercise was to ask for the participants' perception of AIDMI's compliance with individual TEC recommendations from the separate reports and to encourage discussion among the participants. In order to share the findings, the five groups were asked to present their findings and invite comments from other participants. Each presentation lasted between five and ten minutes.

An example of the findings from the Capacities group is given in the first group assignment table.

First Group Assignment		
TEC lessons/recommendations	Rating	Example from AIDMI work
The affected families or individuals should be empowered to assess and prioritise their own welfare needs by using cash subsidies wherever possible. (<i>Capacities report P 64</i>)	A	Cash for work and Cash for shelter programs in Gujarat floods, tsunami, and Kashmir earthquake recovery.

Second Group Assignment	
Overall recommendation	AIDMI's compliance rating and examples
All actors should strive to increase their disaster response capacities and to improve the linkages and coherence between themselves and other actors in the international disaster response system, including those from the affected countries themselves.	
Practical implications of the recommendation:	
1. Agencies should increase their own emergency response capacity;	
2. Agencies should support developing national disaster response capacity in line with the Hyogo Framework;	
3. Agencies should support developing community-based disaster reduction; and	
4. Agencies should develop linkages with other potential humanitarian actors.	

The second group assignment discussed AIDMI's compliance with the most important TEC recommendations and the practical implications of those recommendations, grouped by the four conclusion areas (Ownership and Accountability, Capacity, Quality and Funding).

The exercise was similar to the first group exercise, but with different groups and focusing on the main recommendations and implications.

For example, the Capacities group was asked to assess AIDMI's compliance with the recommendations and implications as shown in the second group assignment table.

Results and problems

The results of the group assessments of AIDMI's compliance with the TEC recommendations were generally more positive than expected. AIDMI was thought to comply with the majority of major TEC recommendations. This is not as unlikely as it seems, since AIDMI was actively involved in the TEC process. Particularly in the case of the Capacities report, AIDMI's compliance with the recommendation can be explained by the amount of influence it had on the contents of the report. AIDMI

Improved Rating Table					
TEC lesson/ recommendation	Rating				How to improve?
	1	2	3	4	

Rating :
 1. No understanding of this TEC recommendation
 2. Recognition of this TEC recommendation
 3. Some progress in implementing this TEC recommendation
 4. High level of integration of this TEC recommendation

campaigned for inclusion of this area of research, resulting in a report that is influenced by AIDMI's ideology, and similar to AIDMI's work.

However, the way the questions were asked did not leave much room for in-between answers, which may have contributed to the positive answers. This problem could be solved by using the improved rating table to ask questions.

Also, there is a danger of oversimplifying the TEC recommen-

dations. To improve the quality of the assessment, recommendations could be broken down to in order to assess whether the agency really complies with the details of the recommendation. The major recommendations can be interpreted in ways that fit the agency's existing policies, but this is much more difficult if there is a focus on the details of the recommendation.

Other strategies to avoid overly positive answers as well as other problems can be found in the 'Sharing Experiences' article. ■

"The quiz was an effective way to introduce TEC innovatively to the participants."
Titus Primita

Internet Resources:

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC),
<http://www.tsunami-evaluation.org>

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Actors (ALNAP),
<http://www.alnap.org>

Red Cross & Red Crescent Code of Conduct,
<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct>

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI),
<http://www.southasiadisasters.net>

"During the Annual Meeting, we learned more about AIDMI's current projects, future goals and activities that are outside of our usual area of expertise."
Pallab Paul



Trude Bruun Thorstensen from Norway and Rakesh Varde discuss AIDMI's compliance with the most important TEC recommendations.

Self-Assessment Tools:

II. Quiz

As part of AIDMI's efforts to make its team acquainted with the TEC reports, five interns organised a quiz. This quiz served several purposes. First, it brought each participant in direct contact with the reports without actually having to read them in their entirety. This way, the large, impressive-looking TEC reports seemed less daunting.

Second, by asking questions and sharing the answers, the whole group learned more about the TEC reports and the recommendations and findings. Questions were selected to apply directly to AIDMI's work.

Guided by the quiz questions, the participants learned to find their way through the TEC reports and to understand their structure. By looking up important recommendations and searching the indexes, participants found it easier to look up information relevant to their work and were inspired to use the TEC reports.

Finally, the quiz was a group exercise and were helped create a fun learning atmosphere. Approximately forty participants were split into five groups, each with one copy of the complete TEC reports. A raised hand indicated a group had found the answer; if, in ninety seconds, no answer was produced, no points were given.

The first part of the quiz discussed all five thematic TEC reports (LRRD, Funding, Capacities, Needs assessment and Coordination). The second part focused on the Synthesis report. By making this distinction, the participants learned about the more detailed reports, and how to find relevant information in them, while stressing the importance of the Synthesis report as a comprehensive guideline and reference.

The participants interest was initially engaged by easy questions at the start and the encouragement of competition between groups. After some preliminary questions, more difficult questions were asked, in order to explore the reports in more depth (see box for examples of questions).

A total of fifteen questions were asked in the first session, covering the five thematic reports. The second session consisted of five questions from the synthesis report. The quizzes were selected to give an overview of the contents of the TEC reports. Since not all participants were fluent in English, the questions were a mixture of easier and more difficult questions. Difficult questions that do not generate an answer may be made easier by giving hints (such as: "Use executive summary").

One hour proved to be enough time for explaining the quiz, the quiz questions themselves, some improvisation, some discussion concerning the rules, and handing out (small) prizes. Throughout the quiz, the team members were enthusiastic and participated well.

At the end of the quiz, one group was ahead in points and received small prizes for each of the team members.

Problems and solutions during the quiz

Some minor problems encountered during the quiz itself included participants raising their hand before finding the answer, and some discussion about the rules. It is advisable to determine a time limit in which a question should be answered after a group indicates that it has found the answer. One foreman should be chosen or appointed in each group to raise their hand and

give the answer, and speak for the group if there are discussions.

More problematic was a shortage of hard copies of the TEC reports. While every group had a copy of the reports, some groups used a laptop with soft copies, while others used the actual, paper, reports. Having one set of TEC reports for each group simplifies the search process, while making it easier to divide tasks (reports) between members of the group.

Soft copies are not as effective in introducing participants to the TEC reports, because the possible use of search options limits the exposure to the reports' contents. However, it is more difficult to search through a soft copy if the search option is not available or not considered. Also, only one person at a time can use a computer, limiting the learning experience for the group. It is therefore not advisable to have a mix of soft copies and hard copies. In this case, the problem was solved by rotating the copies.

One of the most important problems that may be encountered in a TEC quiz is the language barrier. The TEC reports are in English, and participants who are not fluent in English may have difficulty understanding the questions or the reports. In addition, those completely unfamiliar with the reports may need to be given an opportunity to look through the reports before the quiz, so that they have at least seen the Contents page, which could help with their orientation.

Despite some small problems, the quiz was described by several people as very interesting and useful. The TEC group quiz helped participants to learn more about TEC in a fun, easy way. ■

Quiz Question Examples

The questions below are examples of quiz questions. Can you find the answers?

Aim of question	Example of question	Purpose/Process	Answer
Introduction	According to the executive summary, what is the overarching recommendation from the Capacities report?	Learning about use of executive summary and recommendations.	
Easy start-up question	What does the abbreviation TEC stand for?	Creating confidence. Also, the abbreviation may be used so often that not everyone knows where it comes from.	
Creating enthusiasm and competition through fast-answer question	What does the abbreviation ERC stand for?	Answer may not need to be looked up, creating a fast pace and competition between groups.	
Basic knowledge of the TEC reports	What are the (abbreviated) names of the five reports?	Discussion of the TEC reports is easier when all participants know the abbreviated names of the reports. Also, this question helps to structure the TEC reports for those who are not at all familiar with them.	
Learning recommendations	What does the recommendation in the paragraph "let affected households assess their own needs" say?	Challenge participants to choose which report to look through; emphasise an important recommendation, and show participants how to find the recommendations.	
Learning about purpose of thematic evaluations and using the evaluation's executive summaries	What is the overall objective of LRRD evaluation?	Since there is no chapter title that mentions the overall objective, participants will have to think of where overall objectives might be found- in the executive summary.	
Learning purpose and use of Synthesis report	What are the six subchapters of "Response"?	Demonstrate that the Synthesis reports cover all areas discussed in the thematic evaluations, and highlight the subchapters to interest the participants.	
Summarising	According to the executive summary, what are the four "Summary Recommendations"?	Encourage participants to look through the executive summary, reading the headings. The question and answer also sum up the main TEC recommendation.	

Tsunami Evaluation Coalition: Regional Stream...

A Glimpse of Progress

- India's National Disaster Management Authority: Brainstorming workshop on 'Training Modules for Community-based Disaster Preparedness'. The Regional Stream presented a discussion paper on 'Meeting Community Preparedness Training Needs on India: Lessons from Tsunami Evaluation Coalition and beyond'.
- Facilitated a plenary discussion on 'Impact of Disaster and Response on Local Capacity for Governance' at Regional Training on Enhancing Capacity for Disaster Recovery. The training was held in Bangkok from March 6-13, 2007.
- 'Lessons from TEC for Shelter Recovery' was presented by AIDMI representative at the 21st Governing Council of the UN Human Settlement Programme held in Kenya on April 18, 2007.
- Institutional compliance with TEC recommendations: On the annual day of All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, observed on April 21 and 23 in Ahmedabad, AIDMI team members discussed the extent to which their work complies with the TEC recommendations. The findings were analysed, as well as what needs to be done to further integrate them with disaster recovery efforts.
- The regional stream has developed draft guidelines to be used by regional organisations to assist in developing training modules that teach the skills necessary to meet TEC "standards" of practice.
- A paper, 'Good Practice in Local Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk

Management in Asia', was presented at the Regional Climate Risk Management Workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal from April 23-26, 2007. It was organised by UNDP BCPR, GEF, and IRICS of Earth Institute. The paper brings out lessons and recommendations from the TEC that may be useful for climate change adaptation initiatives.

- The principal recommendations of TEC, on ownership and accountability, capacity, quality and funding, were discussed with respect to climate change adaptation initiatives at an event titled 'Climate Change, Humanitarian Disasters and International Development: Linking Vulnerability, Risk Reduction and Response Capacity'. The event was held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Norway in Oslo, Norway on April 27.
- The Regional Stream is designing five workshops in collaboration with five regional partner organisations. The theme of each workshop is in an area found of critical relevance by TEC. Each event will share the TEC process and findings, and integrate recommendations into the partners' ongoing initiatives.
- Drafts of the periodical *southasiadisasters.net* are ready and focus on a variety of issues advocated by TEC reviews. These include: (a) local capacities, claim-holder rights, and dignity in tsunami relief; (b) TEC findings and transition shelter advocacy issues; (c) climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and (d) local governance and risk reduction. ■

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Note: This issue of southasiadisasters.net is prepared by AIDMI with major contributions from Jacoba van de Donk, Tommy Reynolds and Manish Patel.

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ALL INDIA DISASTER MITIGATION INSTITUTE

411 Sakar Five, Near Natraj Cinema, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad-380 009 India

Tel: +91-79-2658 6234/2658 3607, Fax: +91-79-2658 2962

E-mail: dmi@icenet.co.in

Website: <http://www.southasiadisasters.net>