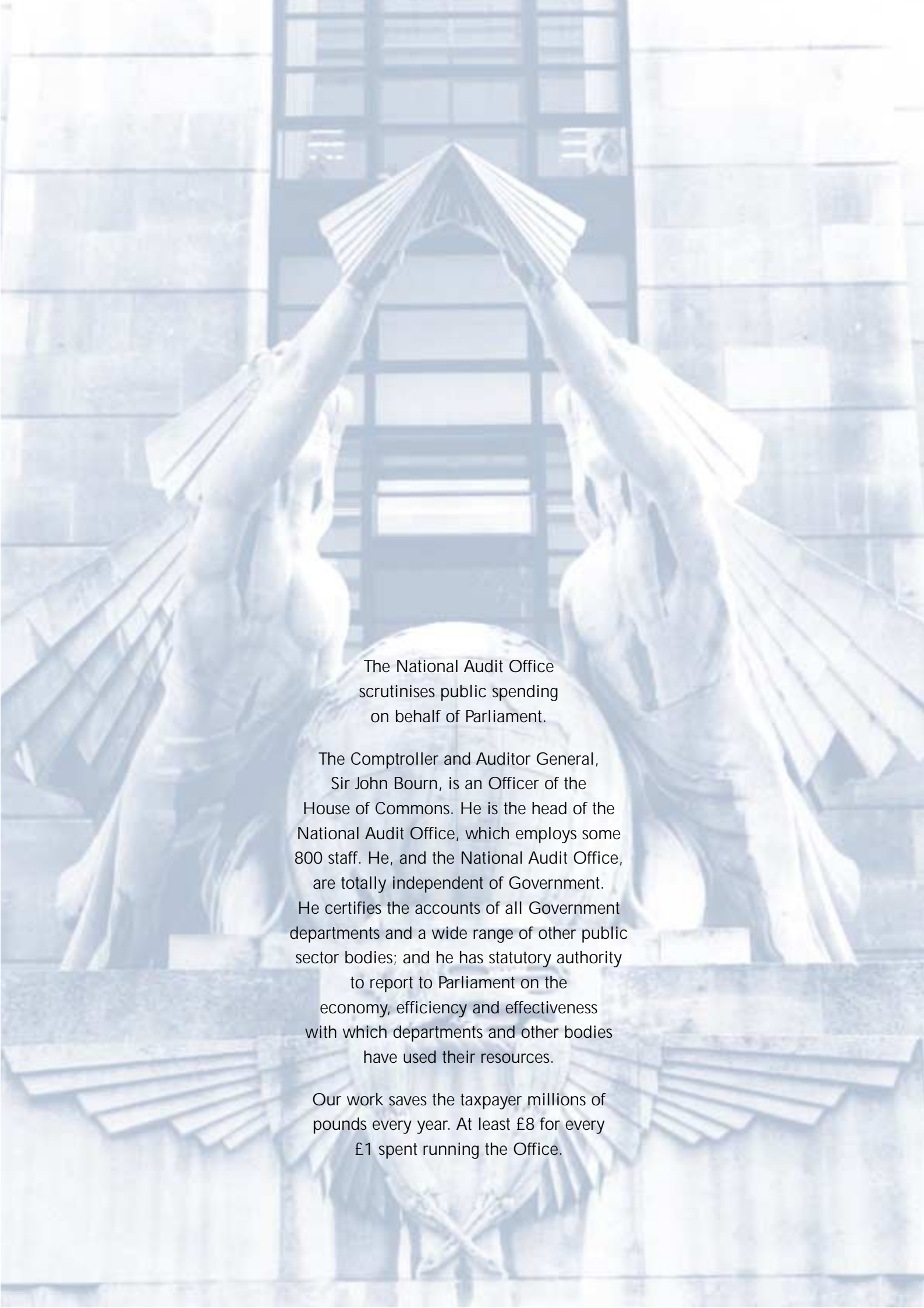


Department for International Development  
**Responding to Humanitarian Emergencies**

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL  
HC 1227 Session 2002-2003: 5 November 2003





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Department for International Development  
Responding to Humanitarian Emergencies



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HC 1227 Session 2002-2003: 5 November 2003

This report has been prepared under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act.

*John Bourn* National Audit Office  
Comptroller and Auditor General 29 October 2003

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# Contents

## Executive summary 1

### Part 1

#### Responding to humanitarian emergencies 9

The frequency and impact of humanitarian emergencies is increasing	9
DFID leads the United Kingdom's humanitarian response	10
The distribution of humanitarian assistance	11
Measuring performance against objectives	12
The focus of our report	13

### Part 2

#### DFID's response to emergencies 15

The speed and effectiveness of DFID's response	15
Matching assistance to need	17
Selecting interventions and partners	18
Evaluating humanitarian responses	20

### Part 3

#### Linking emergency response and longer-term development 21

Managing the interface between relief and development	21
Maintaining a safe and secure environment for humanitarian assistance	22
Working with partners	24

### Part 4

#### Avoiding and minimising the impact of humanitarian emergencies 27

The importance of disaster and conflict reduction	27
Reducing risks and vulnerability	27
Prioritisation of disaster preparedness	28
Establishing the value of disaster preparedness	30

### Appendices

1. Humanitarian principles	31
2. Criteria for pursuing cost-effective humanitarian assistance	32
3. Methodology	33
4. Overview of the case studies we examined as part of this study	34
5. Costs and benefits of disaster mitigation measures	36

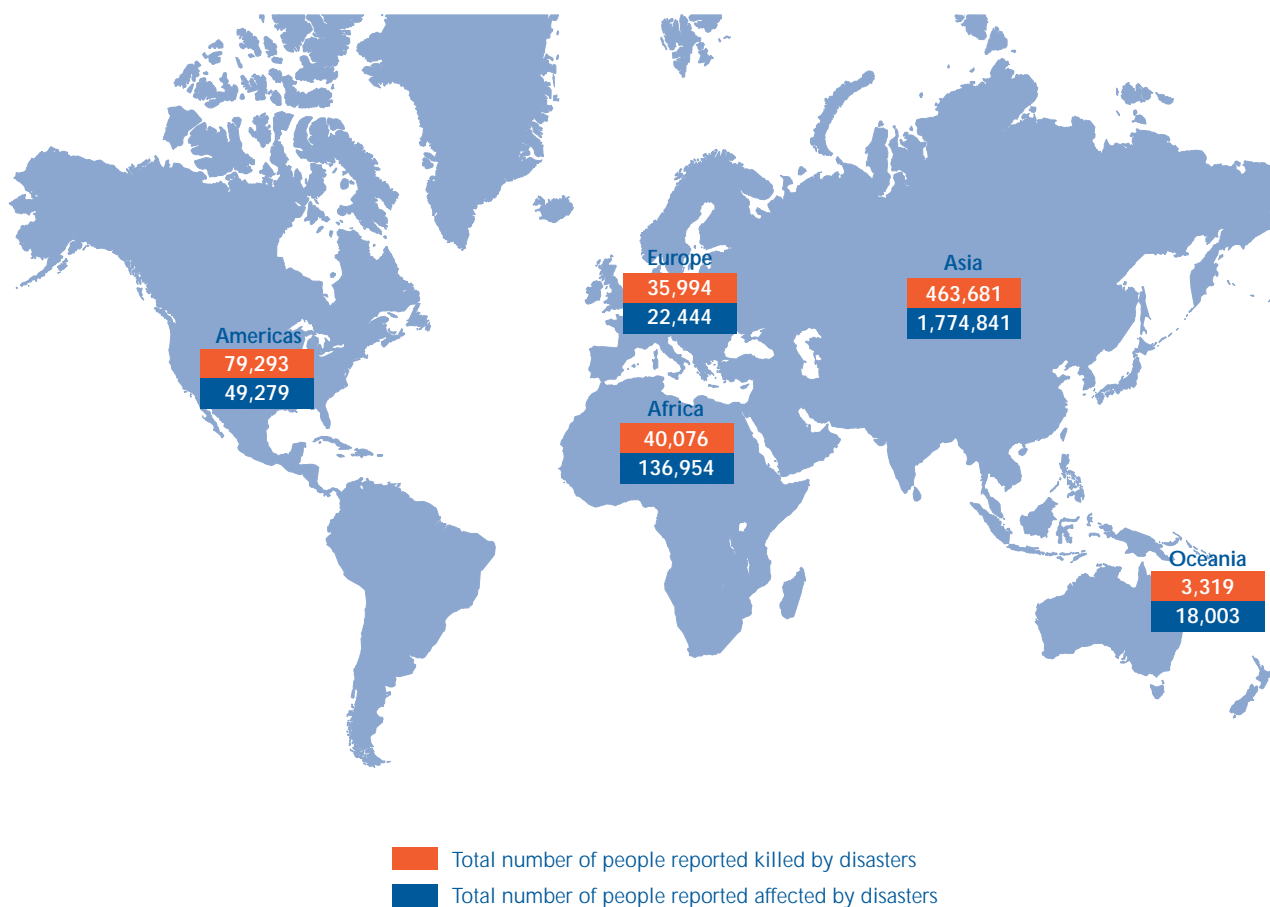
# executive summary

## The scale of humanitarian emergencies

- 1 On 26 January 2001, an earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale hit Gujarat State in India. Over 18,000 people were killed and more than 160,000 injured. Some 200,000 houses, 1,200 schools, 300 health centres and three hospitals were completely destroyed. Around 900,000 houses were damaged. In 2002 when civil war ended in Sierra Leone, estimates of the number of people killed during the preceding nine years were put as high as 200,000. Humanitarian disasters, whether caused by sudden or slow developing natural catastrophes, or by man-made events such as civil war, can have a devastating effect and their incidence is increasing. The annual total of disasters has grown from between 300 and 400 during the early 1990s to between 700 and 800 since 1999<sup>1</sup>; and certain regions have been affected more than others (**Figure 1 overleaf**). The consequences of disasters can be far reaching: destroying development advances built up over decades, with the poorest people suffering the most; and causing significant economic damage. In some countries disasters may jeopardise achievement of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals which propose halving by 2015 the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by member countries of the United Nations in 2000 and provide a global consensus on objectives for addressing poverty.
- 2 The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the United Kingdom's response to humanitarian disasters. The response is largely in the form of bilateral funding to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and funding to multilateral organisations such as United Nations agencies. DFID can also provide direct operational, technical and logistical support. In 2001-02, DFID provided £279 million in humanitarian assistance, around eight per cent of its total budget of £3,644 million, making it the second largest humanitarian aid donor after the United States of America. In providing humanitarian assistance DFID seeks to: save lives and relieve suffering; hasten recovery; protect and rebuild livelihoods and communities; and reduce risks of and vulnerability to future crises. DFID has also established *Principles for a New Humanitarianism* (Appendix 1) which commits it to '... seek to promote a more universal approach to addressing humanitarian needs. People in need - wherever they are - should have equal status to rights and assistance ...'. This report examines:
  - the effectiveness of DFID's relief measures when a humanitarian emergency occurs;
  - the extent to which DFID integrates its emergency response into longer-term development initiatives; and
  - whether DFID is working effectively to minimise the occurrence and impact of humanitarian emergencies.

<sup>1</sup> *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2002), World Disasters Report: Focus on reducing risk, page 185.*

## 1 The regional distribution of people killed and affected by natural disasters 1992-2001

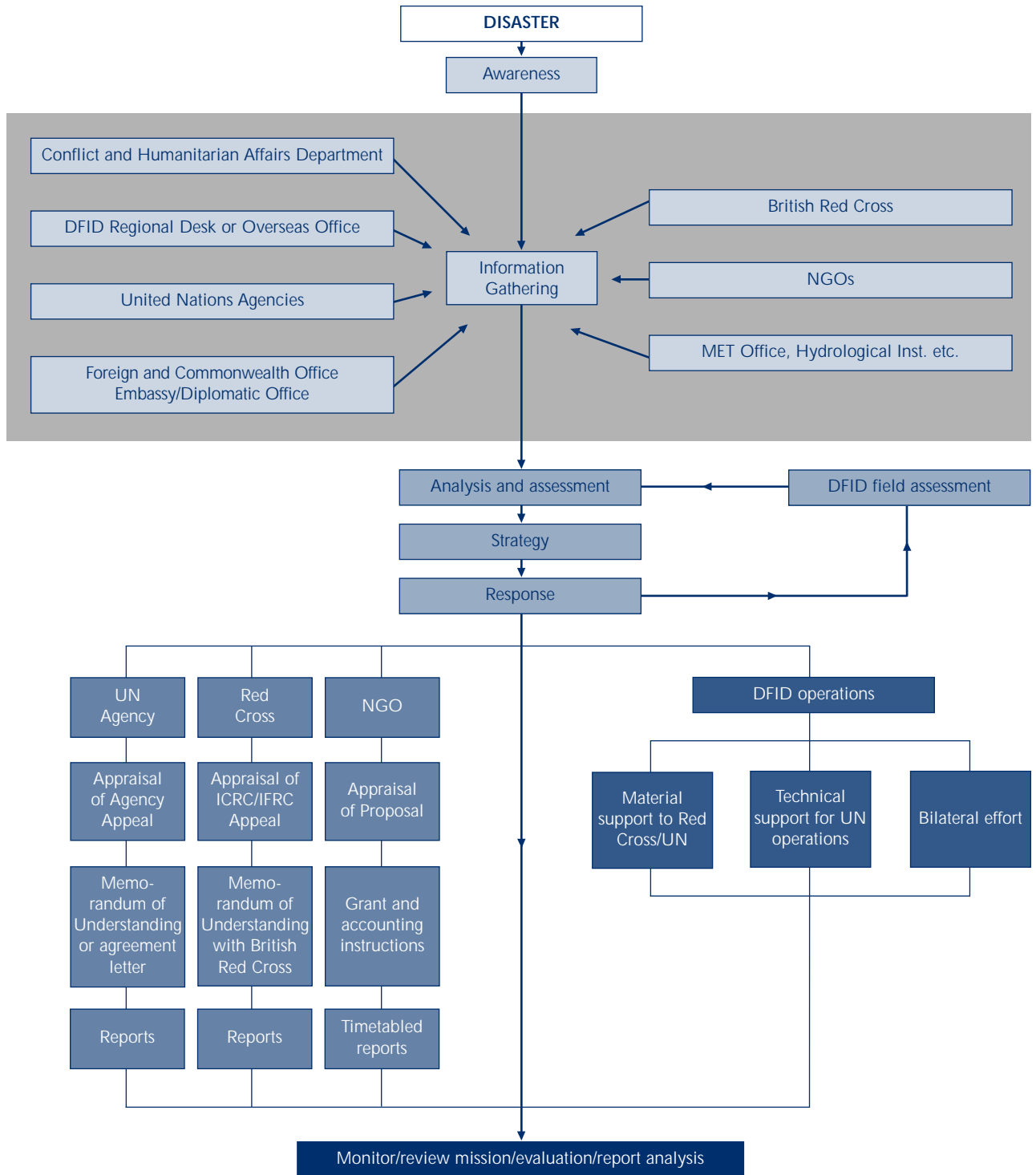


Source: National Audit Office mapping of data from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent World Disasters Report 2002

## Responding to humanitarian emergencies

- 3 The particular circumstances of an emergency determine the action taken by DFID, although there are common stages to the response DFID is likely to make (**Figure 2**). Within DFID, geographical divisions are responsible for responding to a humanitarian emergency, especially in slow-onset and complex political emergencies, and recurrent natural disasters. When a sudden-onset disaster occurs, such as an earthquake, or if the disaster occurs in an area where DFID has no ongoing programme of development, DFID's Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Department (CHAD) takes the lead. CHAD also provides advice and support to geographical divisions on a range of subjects, including conflict prevention and resolution; emergency response preparedness and contingency planning; and initiatives intended to reduce the vulnerability of people to future disasters. CHAD also has an operations team which provides field-level humanitarian expertise to assist with a response.
- 4 DFID has been generally effective when intervening in humanitarian emergencies, with short-term objectives in providing food, shelter and water being met in the majority of cases. In particular, DFID has been quick to respond to sudden-onset disasters. In such emergencies, speed of response is crucial, as people can only survive three to four days without water and three to four weeks without food. DFID's partners, such as NGOs and multilateral organisations, told us that its speed of response was impressive when compared

2 The stages of DFID's humanitarian response



- Following a disaster, the different organisations involved in responding to an emergency gather data and share information.
- DFID analyses the different sources of information to assess needs. It then designs a strategy to target its resources.
- DFID assesses project appeals and proposals. It then allocates funding to selected partners who implement the project on the ground. DFID requires its partners to submit reports to demonstrate how funds have been used.
- DFID may also give direct assistance through its operations team, for example Search and Rescue Teams or by providing staff to help co-ordinate the international response.
- DFID has an ongoing role in visiting, monitoring and evaluating the interventions that it funds to ensure that projects meet their objectives.



with that of other donors. For example, following the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, DFID was the first donor to arrive, with an assessment team in place the day after the disaster occurred. A British search and rescue team arrived within 50 hours of the earthquake; began work within 15 minutes of landing; and had saved one person within three hours of deploying to the worst affected area. In total they saved six people and supported a search and rescue team from the Russian Federation who saved a further 17 people. While these are small numbers, compared with the numbers of people killed, this action illustrates the successful use of specialist skills and assets in circumstances where speed of deployment was vital.

- 5 The division of responsibility between geographical divisions and CHAD, however, has often not been formalised, with CHAD's role being decided in many instances on a case by case basis. A degree of flexibility in DFID's organisational response will always be needed but this ad-hoc approach creates a risk that humanitarian assistance will not be provided in a timely manner whilst roles are clarified. The capacity of regional and country teams to respond to emergencies varies across DFID and clarity about respective responsibilities, reflecting those variations as appropriate, would be particularly helpful for those teams who have limited specialist humanitarian expertise of their own.
- 6 Targeting humanitarian assistance at those most in need is a key principle which guides DFID's response. Assessing need, however, is not always straightforward and can suffer from the lack of comprehensive data both at the global level, and at the level of an individual disaster. DFID is working with other donors and multilateral agencies to develop clear and measurable ways of assessing humanitarian need. DFID recognises that without a global assessment of humanitarian need it cannot identify whether its response to one emergency is appropriate compared with another. DFID has calculated that, since 1997, the per capita level of humanitarian assistance it has provided in European emergencies has been five times higher than for emergencies in Africa. It concluded that this difference could not be explained just by differences in the cost of delivery and associated security. Rather, it raised the possibility that wider strategic considerations were important in determining the allocation of resources. This was an issue for other donors as well.
- 7 In relation to particular emergencies, choosing between different delivery channels on the grounds of cost-effectiveness can be difficult, given the need for speed and flexibility in any response; and the limited practical choices which DFID might be faced with in different situations. Despite these difficulties, benefits exist in country teams being able to identify the strengths and risks associated with different options. But DFID currently does not have guidelines to help country teams identify the sort of criteria they should employ when carrying out such assessments.
- 8 There are few specified performance measures for humanitarian assistance, and none that relate directly to humanitarian principles or outcomes. While each emergency will have unique features which need to be addressed, the lack of a core of common indicators hinders consistent planning as well as performance monitoring. Notwithstanding the scope for better indicators, DFID needs to evaluate the success or otherwise of its humanitarian assistance work in order to learn lessons for the future. In 1997, DFID helped set up the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action with other bilateral and multilateral donors, United Nations agencies, and NGOs. This network brings together the results of evaluations carried out by its

members to identify common themes. However, within DFID itself, there appear to be significant gaps in the evaluation of its humanitarian assistance. Since 1997, DFID's Evaluation Department has only assessed the success of DFID's response to the Montserrat volcanic eruption. CHAD and country teams have carried out a number of evaluations in the last three years, but most focused on the performance of a specific partner rather than on DFID's performance. Only one evaluation gave a view of DFID's response overall.

## Linking emergency response and longer-term development

- 9 Emergencies, even those of a protracted and complex nature, usually have a finite life. At some stage, relief work will need to be integrated into longer-term development programmes designed to reduce poverty. How well this is done can help or hinder the success of these programmes. DFID recognised the importance of managing this transition and we found, in the countries we visited, that those working with DFID saw it as relatively more effective than other donors in this respect. In particular, in some countries, DFID was seen as being more flexible with funding and in considering the broader picture during a response.
- 10 DFID could do more, however, to ensure that its NGO partners understand its strategy for moving from humanitarian relief work, through rehabilitation and reconstruction, to longer-term development assistance. Without this understanding, other key organisations are less able to identify their own roles, which may undermine the success of any transition. In Sierra Leone NGOs considered that DFID had been slow in communicating its strategy. And in Sudan, DFID had prepared an Approach Paper to indicate its strategy for transitional assistance. Multilateral partners were aware of this but some NGOs in the south of the country had not seen the paper at the time of our review and thus expressed uncertainty about its content. In contrast, although NGO partners were not party to DFID's planning prior to military intervention in Iraq, they welcomed the work DFID had done to communicate its intended approach to rehabilitation once military action began.
- 11 Achieving an effective transition from relief work to development is also helped by funding which enables longer-term planning by those organisations through which DFID works. Multi-year funding agreements available to multilateral organisations allow them to be less constrained by the short-term nature of humanitarian funding, and to plan transitional work more effectively. NGO partners expressed interest in DFID making such agreements more readily available to them as well.
- 12 A particular challenge faced by DFID and other humanitarian organisations is maintaining a safe and secure environment for humanitarian assistance. The creation of such 'humanitarian space', in which aid agencies can operate and victims recover, is particularly relevant when the humanitarian emergency results from conflict. Although outside a strict definition of humanitarian assistance, DFID may fund some activities carried out by peacekeeping forces to help save lives and reduce misery, as in Sudan. Alternatively, British forces may make a contribution in kind, as in the Balkans; or as an occupying force, upholding associated legal obligations, including maintenance of security as currently in Iraq. The situation in Iraq illustrates the need for proper co-ordination between security and reconstruction efforts in order to minimise the impact of poor security on the safety of aid workers and their ability to progress reconstruction.

## Avoiding and minimising the impact of humanitarian emergencies

- 13** Reducing and preventing disaster and conflict are seen increasingly as important factors in limiting humanitarian suffering. By reducing the vulnerability of populations, especially the poorest, they are better able to withstand the effect of disasters. The World Bank and the United States Geological Survey have calculated that economic losses estimated at US\$400 billion worldwide as a result of disasters in the 1990s could have been reduced by US\$280 billion if US\$40 billion had been invested in mitigation measures.
- 14** Recognising the importance of reduction and prevention work DFID has sought to reduce risks and vulnerability to future crises. Since 2000, CHAD has adopted a more strategic approach with the use of its £3 million annual disaster reduction budget, through which it has funded international initiatives designed to increase the safety of vulnerable communities and reduce the impact of disasters in developing countries. We also identified examples of work being carried out by DFID on the ground in order to reduce the risk of humanitarian suffering. These include £50 million to fund work designed to halve extreme poverty in the Chars areas of Bangladesh which are subject to annual flooding.
- 15** But DFID has had no formal strategy for this work at a policy level. A review in 1998 of the Emergency Aid Department by DFID's Consultancy and Review Section also concluded that '*... geographical departments often do not have the time, the resources or the inclination to support disaster preparedness*<sup>2</sup> . In 2000, DFID-funded analysis indicated that of the 18 most recently revised strategies for hazard-prone countries and regions, 11 recognised natural disasters as factors in their contextual analysis; but only five had risk reduction as a significant component of their plans; and only one included a budget specifically for mitigation and preparedness<sup>3</sup>. National Audit Office analysis of a number of country strategies confirmed the marginal coverage given to humanitarian and/or disaster reduction issues.
- 16** This situation has improved with the development of new Country Assistance Plans, which are gradually replacing Country Strategy Papers. Country Assistance Plans or draft Plans for those countries we visited gave greater attention to disaster reduction. For example, through promoting regional approaches to food security in southern Africa; and recognition of the role of livelihoods work in tackling vulnerability in Bangladesh. But despite this, there remains scope for improvement in the quality of risk assessment, and the degree to which the response is clearly articulated and linked to resource allocation and performance objectives. Good analysis does not mean that DFID has to take the lead in - or attach highest priority to - risk mitigation; but in some countries we visited it was not clear how the level of importance afforded to disaster reduction had been decided.



<sup>2</sup> Mosselmans, M (1998), Consultancy and Review Section Study of Emergency Aid Department.

<sup>3</sup> Twigg J, C Benson, M Myers and D Steiner (2000), *NGO Natural Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Progress: A Study of International Development and Relief NGOs based in the UK.*

# Overall conclusion and recommendations

- 17** The overall effectiveness of DFID's response to humanitarian emergencies was widely recognised by other donors, multilateral agencies and NGOs. It was seen to be quick and flexible, particularly when responding to rapid-onset disasters, and has contributed to the saving of lives as a result. There are, however, issues which DFID needs to address when responding to other types of emergencies; and in developing further the integration of relief work into longer-term development programmes, and realising the potential of disaster prevention and reduction work.
- 18** In order to ensure that it is well-placed to respond to all types of disasters, DFID should:
- i) consider extending Africa Division's and CHAD's formalisation of their respective responsibilities for specified types of disasters to other geographical divisions;
  - ii) build on current work to improve the quality of humanitarian needs assessment, and establish a better defined process to move from humanitarian principles, through needs assessment to resource allocation;
  - iii) provide guidelines for country teams to use when assessing the strengths and risks associated with available channels through which to route assistance (Appendix 2 sets out some relevant questions to be considered when designing such guidance);
  - iv) seek to ensure that all major humanitarian interventions, where DFID has provided a response, are evaluated either jointly with others, or by others or DFID alone; and
  - v) devise a set of performance indicators related to its humanitarian principles that help in emergency planning and performance monitoring.
- 19** To make sure relief work is effectively integrated into longer-term development work, DFID should:
- i) communicate clearly to partner organisations:
    - a) where responsibility for managing the transition between relief and development lies within DFID; and
    - b) the approach to integration, so that they can be clear as to the circumstances in which DFID will support such work.
  - ii) consider extending, where appropriate, its use of multi-year funding to a wider range of partner organisations.
- 20** To reflect the importance of disaster reduction and prevention work, DFID should:
- i) complete, as quickly as possible, research to establish the impact of disaster reduction and preparedness on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in order to highlight its importance to longer-term development;
  - ii) make sure staff in charge of country programmes understand the significance of that research when assessing risks to successful development;
  - iii) where a major emergency has occurred, require country teams to address its impact on future development plans; and
  - iv) make sure that strategies, particularly for disaster prone countries and regions, have explicitly considered the risks posed by humanitarian emergencies and whether prevention and reduction work could minimise those risks.

# Part 1

## Responding to humanitarian emergencies

*A humanitarian emergency involves 'any situation in which...life or well-being...will be threatened unless immediate and appropriate action is taken, and which demands an extraordinary response and exceptional measures.'*

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Handbook for Emergencies, 1999**

### The frequency and impact of humanitarian emergencies is increasing

1.1 The number of disasters occurring worldwide each year is increasing, related to the erosion of the earth's natural defences combined with an increase in weather-related disasters resulting from global warming; rising numbers of ethnic and communal conflicts within and across national boundaries; and better systems for reporting disasters. The World Disasters Report shows that during the early 1990s, some 300-400 occurred every year compared with 700-800 per year since 1999<sup>4</sup>. Typically emergencies can be distinguished as:

- **Natural disasters** - either sudden-onset or slow-onset. Sudden-onset disasters, such as earthquakes, occur with little or no warning and have an immediate impact. Slow-onset disasters, such as drought and famine, may take weeks or months before they begin to have a significant impact on human activity and welfare. In reality, few natural disasters occur without any warning, and improved monitoring is increasing both the accuracy and length of warnings. Bangladesh and India are two of the countries in the world most prone to disasters. Bangladesh experiences almost annual floods, some more devastating than others, while a major cyclone hits the eastern shore of India every two to eight years. The Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia and Somalia, is particularly vulnerable to drought and floods.
- **Complex emergencies** - with natural and/or man-made components. These may involve civil war, extensive violence, the breakdown of national authority, food shortages and population displacement as well as security risks for aid workers and people in need. Recent and current examples include the civil wars of Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

1.2 While the number of people killed by natural disasters has stabilised at around 800,000 per year, the wider number affected by disasters and associated economic losses has increased significantly. In the 1990s, natural disasters affected an annual average of some 200 million people - nearly three times higher than during the 1970s - with economic losses averaging US\$63 billion per year. Traceable losses in 1999's earthquakes cost Turkey around US\$20 billion, and landslides in Venezuela in the same year cost US\$10 billion - both figures equivalent to over 10 per cent of each nation's annual Gross Domestic Product<sup>5</sup>. The impact of disasters can therefore destroy development advances built up over decades, and set back the prospects for on-going development for years to come. The poor suffer the most because they are more exposed to hazards, but also they are less able to cope in the event of a disaster.

1.3 For the purposes of this report, we use the term *humanitarian assistance* as meaning the provision of material aid (such as food, medical care and personnel), finance and advice which goes towards saving lives and preventing suffering; hastening recovery, and protecting and rebuilding livelihoods and communities; and reducing risks and vulnerability to future crises. This is in line with the Department for International Development's (DFID) own definition of humanitarian assistance. We also use the term *humanitarian response* in a broader sense to include the provision of humanitarian assistance as well as related aspects of development and conflict prevention expenditures, and the processes and organisational and managerial structures which contribute to a particular humanitarian intervention.

1.4 The rising frequency and impact of humanitarian emergencies, and responses to them, is reflected in the increasing level of official international humanitarian assistance. In 1990, aid was equivalent to US\$2.9 billion (in 1999 prices); in 2000, this had nearly doubled to US\$5.9 billion. The international humanitarian system includes a broad range of

<sup>4</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2002), *World Disasters Report: Focus on reducing risk, Table 1.*  
<sup>5</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2002), *World Disasters Report: Focus on reducing risk, page 10.*

organisations working to alleviate the impact of humanitarian emergencies including international organisations such as the United Nations, national and donor governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as local civil society and communities.

## DFID leads the United Kingdom's humanitarian response

- 1.5 DFID responds to humanitarian emergencies within the framework of the 1997 and 2000 White Papers on International Development and the International Development Act 2002. The International Development Act 2002 is the central piece of legislation governing when the United Kingdom can give development or humanitarian assistance, the form of assistance, and on what terms. Specifically, it gives a power to the Secretary of State to provide humanitarian assistance in time of disaster. Unlike development aid, humanitarian assistance is not required to promote sustainable development or the reduction of poverty.
- 1.6 In line with the figures for official international humanitarian assistance, DFID has also increased its annual level of support for humanitarian emergencies. This reflects the steady annual increase in the number of disasters, and in particular, international responses to conflict induced crises. In 2001-02, DFID gave a total of £279 million in humanitarian assistance, around eight per cent of its total budget, making it the second

largest humanitarian aid donor after the United States. This level of spending is broadly comparable to that in 2000-01 (£278 million) but represents a significant increase in humanitarian assistance from 1990-91 of some £134 million.

- 1.7 DFID has had a formal Conflict Reduction and Humanitarian Assistance Policy since 1999, and in June 2003 initiated a review process which will inform the reformulation of the policy. The purpose of the current policy is to:

- Save lives and relieve suffering;
- Hasten recovery, and protect and rebuild livelihoods and communities; and
- Reduce risks and vulnerability to future crises.

DFID's strategies for implementing its humanitarian policy are set out in **Figure 3**.

- 1.8 To help guide its provision of humanitarian assistance, DFID has established standards as set out in its *Principles for a New Humanitarianism* (Appendix 1). The principles include a commitment to 'seek to promote a more universal approach to addressing humanitarian needs. People in need - wherever they are - should have equal status to rights and assistance'. In practical terms, the principles imply equal and coherent attention to the causes and consequences of humanitarian emergencies.

### 3 DFID's strategies for implementing its humanitarian policy

Better manage natural, environmental and industrial risks	Improve the quality of humanitarian response and promote speedy recovery	Encourage the strengthening of international systems for dealing with humanitarian crises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Encouraging countries to include risk reduction, disaster management and disaster mitigation in their development planning;</li> <li>■ Supporting community initiatives to reduce vulnerability;</li> <li>■ Strengthening countries' capacities to clear landmines;</li> <li>■ Encouraging international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank to include in their strategies risk reduction, disaster management and disaster mitigation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improving assessment of needs;</li> <li>■ Encouraging humanitarian agencies to take fuller account of developmental considerations, especially in natural disasters;</li> <li>■ Supporting rehabilitation and recovery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Promoting better understanding of the social, economic and environmental factors that affect countries' vulnerability to disasters;</li> <li>■ Working with international humanitarian organisations to improve their capacity to respond;</li> <li>■ Seeking agreement on common standards of technical performance, reporting and co-ordination;</li> <li>■ Promoting better co-ordination and humanitarian assistance within the European Community.</li> </ul>

Source: DFID

1.9 DFID's principles are in line with a similar framework endorsed by representatives of government and multilateral donors at an International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship in Stockholm in June 2003 (also set out in Appendix 1). DFID has been instrumental in pushing other international donors to endorse the principles. A part of CHAD's role is to ensure that DFID's work on humanitarian assistance follows its humanitarian principles and the strategies set out in Figure 3; but DFID has not set up formal arrangements to monitor either this or compliance with its own principles, although part of CHAD's role is to promote coherence with these principles.

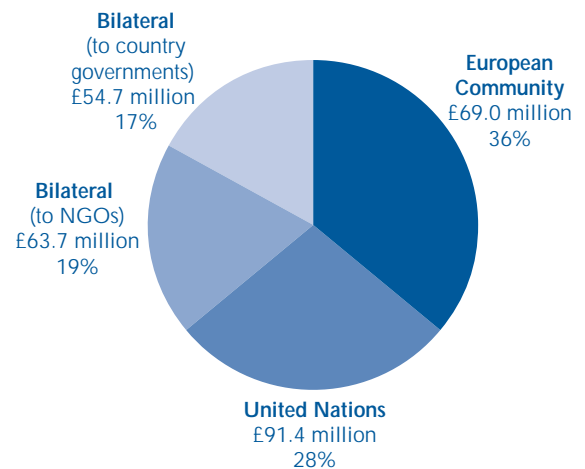
1.10 Humanitarian emergencies also affect the achievement of development goals. DFID's strategic aim is the elimination of extreme poverty, reflected in two International Development White Papers published in 1997 and 2000. These commit the United Kingdom to internationally agreed targets, now known as the Millennium Development Goals, which propose halving the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty by 2015, together with associated targets such as universal primary education and basic healthcare provision. To meet these targets, DFID must address the principal challenges to progress on development, which can include the effects of complex emergencies and some natural disasters.

## The distribution of humanitarian assistance

1.11 DFID is primarily a policy and funding organisation, co-ordinating the response and monitoring the use of its funds by other organisations, such as NGOs and multilateral agencies such as the United Nations and the European Community. **Figure 4** shows the channels through which DFID distributes humanitarian assistance. In addition to the official amounts reported by DFID, there are further resources which have a humanitarian purpose, but which are not classified as humanitarian assistance. This includes expenditure like preventative work which forms part of wider development programmes, for example, spending on food security within a rural livelihoods programme. For example, of the £37 million spent in Sierra Leone in 2001-02 following peace, DFID scored £2 million as humanitarian relief, with the rest being viewed as a contribution to longer-term rehabilitation.

1.12 Forty three per cent (£118.4 million) of DFID's humanitarian funding is bilateral aid, of which £63.7 million is channelled through NGOs. The remaining 57 per cent goes to multilateral organisations. As part of the multilateral response to humanitarian emergencies, the United Nation's Office for the

### 4 DFID's humanitarian assistance by distribution channel, 2001-02



#### NOTE

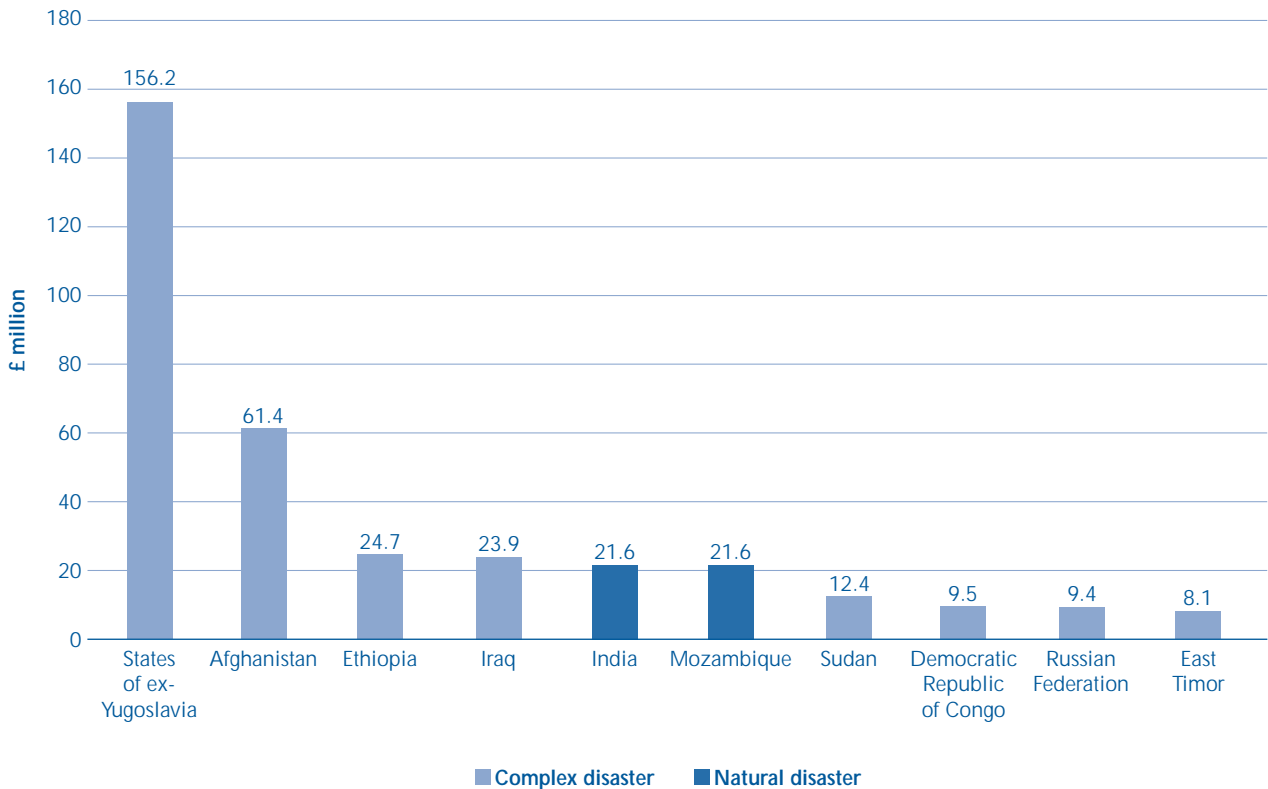
*Of the £91.4 million in assistance provided to the United Nations, around £44.3 million was core contributions to organisations including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Agency for Palestinian Refugees. The remaining £47.1 million was provided to individual United Nations country programmes in response to humanitarian crises.*

*Source: DFID*

Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance was set up in 1998 and plays a key role in co-ordinating international action. The Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission is also a key player and accounts for around 30 per cent of global humanitarian aid.

1.13 **Figure 5 overleaf** shows the ten countries which received the most humanitarian assistance from DFID between 1999-00 and 2001-02. In this period, the £348.8 million provided to these countries constituted 61 per cent of the total of £571.5 million in bilateral humanitarian assistance provided by DFID over the same period. Most humanitarian assistance went in responding to protracted, conflict-related complex emergencies such as those in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Iraq (**Figure 6 overleaf**). A much smaller proportion was in response to natural disasters such as those in India and Mozambique. As of August 2003, DFID had committed £150 million of the £210 million allocated for responding to the crisis in Iraq. A further £60 million is available from the Treasury reserve if additional need is identified. In 2003-04, DFID has also allocated £43.3 million towards the southern Africa humanitarian crisis, bringing the total allocation since its onset in September 2001 to £106 million (plus a further £21 million through the European Community).

**5** Ten countries receiving the most humanitarian assistance from DFID between 1999-00 to 2001-02

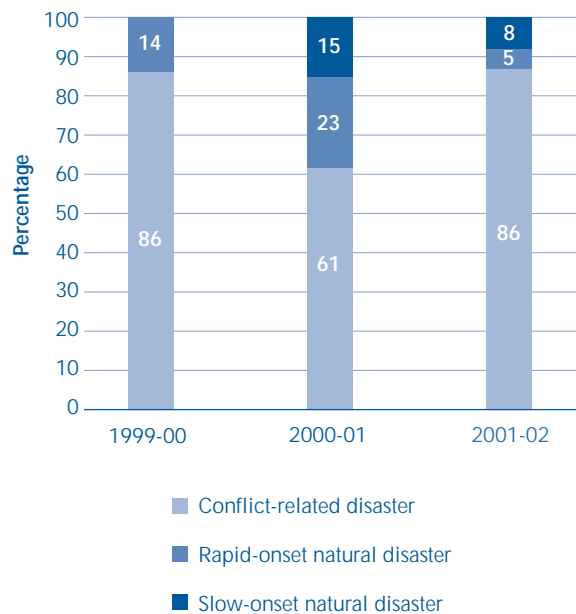


Source: National Audit Office analysis of DFID data

## Measuring performance against objectives

1.14 DFID's mission is to eliminate poverty in poorer countries through achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and its Public Service Agreement is directly aligned to that mission. Public Service Agreements, whilst not intended to cover every area of departments' work, are designed to reflect key priorities and focus on the outcomes which matter most. Humanitarian assistance is not reflected in DFID's Public Service Agreement, although targets do address related issues such as conflict prevention. There is also no international agreement on whether there needs to be a Millennium Development Goal on humanitarian emergencies. Currently there is no such goal, although at the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, DFID and other partners supported the development of such a goal in principle.

**6** Percentage of humanitarian assistance provided by DFID by type of emergency, 1999-00 to 2001-02



Source: National Audit Office analysis of DFID data



## 7 DFID's 2001-04 and 2003-06 Service Delivery Agreement

	SDA period	
	2001-04	2003-06
Target	Reduce the impact of violent conflicts, manmade and natural disasters by the provision of timely, co-ordinated emergency assistance in response to crisis situations.	Strengthen and improve the international system's response to humanitarian disasters and complex emergencies.
Measurement	Measurement of this target is through 'more focused and co-ordinated development assistance by the international community', determined by the impact on its primary goal of poverty elimination.	Performance will be assessed by comparing loss of life, livelihoods and property in disasters or complex emergencies with previous comparable events.
NAO Comment	Assessment of humanitarian activity through the overall impact on poverty elimination is problematic because humanitarian assistance is not necessarily linked to this goal (as set out in paragraph 1.7).	In comparing loss of life, livelihoods and property with previous events, DFID, like other development agencies, faces the difficulty of adequately isolating the impact of its work on progress towards the target given the range of external factors and other organisations involved.

Source: DFID departmental report and National Audit Office analysis

1.15 At a lower level, humanitarian performance targets exist which focus specifically on multilateral partners (Figure 7). For the period 2003-06, the target ties into DFID's objective to 'increase the impact of key multilateral agencies in reducing poverty and effective response to conflict and humanitarian crises'. But DFID's own role as a strategic organisation and its relationship with other partners such as NGOs and private contractors, is not measured. More generally DFID has not yet established a methodology or baseline to form the basis for performance monitoring, although it is currently working on these issues.

## The focus of our report

1.16 Responding to emergencies is a key part of DFID's business. Specifically, this report examines:

- the effectiveness of DFID's contribution to the provision of relief when a humanitarian emergency occurs;
- the extent to which DFID integrates its emergency response into longer-term development initiatives; and
- how DFID is working effectively to minimise the occurrence and impact of humanitarian emergencies.

As part of our review we visited Bangladesh, India, Sierra Leone, southern Africa (South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Sudan to understand the different contexts in which DFID responds to emergencies. Further details of the methodology we used to carry out the study are set out in Appendix 3. Appendix 4 outlines the case studies we used to review DFID's response to humanitarian emergencies.

# Part 2

## DFID's response to emergencies

2.1 This Part of the report considers the assistance DFID provides and the factors which influence its response. We found that DFID is effective in providing humanitarian assistance although it could improve the way it responds in some areas.

### The speed and effectiveness of DFID's response

2.2 We reviewed the small number of evaluations of DFID's work, and of international humanitarian response more generally, to assess performance in a particular intervention. The 2002 review by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)<sup>6</sup>, which identifies and promulgates common themes in evaluations from across the humanitarian sector from a range of organisations, concluded that '*the evaluation reports tell a story of a job well done*' but that there were '*generic weaknesses within the system*' including '*a lack of connectedness in all sectors ... and limited co-ordination*'<sup>7</sup>. We found that short term objectives in the majority of interventions are achieved with affected populations fed, sheltered and

provided with water, sanitation and basic healthcare. In the countries we visited, DFID's peers, partners, and beneficiaries, told us that DFID's interventions had generally been effective (Figure 8).

2.3 The speed at which donors can arrive on the scene of an emergency to assess need and begin to provide assistance has a bearing on the effectiveness of their response. Within DFID, CHAD is responsible for responding to rapid-onset disasters. Where partners are delivering humanitarian assistance, DFID must also assess proposals and release funds quickly. We found that DFID's peers and partners considered the speed of DFID's response as impressive when compared with other donors. They also praised DFID's flexibility in responding to changed circumstances or unusual requests. For example, in Zambia, the government had food stocks in the North of the country which it was unable to move to the famine-stricken South because it lacked transport. DFID was able to respond quickly with support for logistics when other donors had difficulty in fitting such support within their definitions of humanitarian assistance.

#### 8 Comments by NGOs on DFID's speed of response

"It's a very good response, it's a quick response, particularly the 2000 flood in Bangladesh, they responded very quickly."

"The Gujarat response was quite quick and speedy from the DFID side."

"We've not had problems with DFID and whenever it's come to resources for emergencies, in terms of not much paperwork, and neither has it got delayed too indefinitely."

"...I would say their strengths, it's easy, it's a quick response... it's immediately accepted or approved, which, in turn, means that we are able to respond to the needs of the people quite fast. We have some donors who have approved a relief project after one year but it's very fast in DFID's case."

"In terms of timeliness of a response, if DFID says they're going to give you something it is facilitated very quickly and many of the other donors you have to negotiate and go through the process and you have to wait and, you know ... so that's been refreshing."

Source: National Audit Office focus groups with NGOs in Bangladesh, India and southern Africa

6 The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action was set up in 1997 by DFID and a range of other bilateral and multilateral donors, United Nations agencies and NGOs. DFID provided £308,000 in core funding as part of this process.

7 ALNAP Annual Review 2002. Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, pages 90 and 143.

2.4 In rapid-onset emergencies, speed is particularly crucial; people can survive only for three to four days without water and three to four weeks without food. In severe disasters where all access to water or food is completely cut off or severely disrupted, DFID and other organisations must react extremely quickly to save lives. Following the Gujarat earthquake, DFID was the first donor to arrive: within 50 hours a 69-person search and rescue team was in place and saved six people and supported the Russian Ministry of Emergency who rescued a further 17 people. These are small numbers, compared with the more than 18,000 people killed, but they illustrate an effective contribution from specialist assets and skills when speed of deployment is vital. For other humanitarian interventions such as the provision of blankets or a water treatment plant, DFID will have an assessment of the number of people it is aiming to assist and be able to gather indicators of the output it achieves, but it is not possible to calculate how many people each intervention has saved. For example, a report by UNICEF on its US\$22 million humanitarian programme in response to the floods in Mozambique, to which DFID contributed US\$3.2 million, showed that some 37,000 children aged under five years were protected from measles and meningitis and that over 100,000 people in settlements were protected from cholera and malaria through spray and provision of water and sanitation.

2.5 DFID's geographic divisions are responsible for responding to humanitarian emergencies but CHAD normally intervenes when a rapid-onset disaster occurs or where additional support is required. CHAD staff have acquired expertise through servicing a series of humanitarian emergencies. This expertise covers needs assessment, dealing with United Nations agencies, information management and briefings, and speedy management of contracts and operations. Such expertise can be maintained only through continued involvement with humanitarian emergencies, and that fact, together with the intensity of work on humanitarian emergencies, has led to CHAD staff usually being deployed in relatively short periods - around three to six months even for ongoing complex emergencies.

2.6 This system means that there has to be a clear understanding of the way that CHAD and country desks should interact. CHAD and the Africa Great Lakes and Horn Department agreed their respective responsibilities in December 2002 to combat what they saw as *'a lack of clarity about respective roles and a perception that we are not working together as effectively as we might'*. Following the southern African humanitarian crisis in 2001-02, DFID recognised that the involvement of CHAD had initially caused friction with the different country offices who had been dealing with the crisis for up to a year before CHAD's arrival. This view was confirmed in our discussion with staff at country offices. In particular, country offices had a misconception of what CHAD would bring to the

emergency response and a nervousness that CHAD would distort the focus of their on-going development programmes. While the agreement between CHAD and the Africa Great Lakes and Horn Department was the only example of formalising relations with a geographical department (aside from those on CHAD's role in a specific crisis such as southern Africa or Liberia), the rest of Africa Division accepted the Africa Great Lakes and Horn Department's approach and their agreement is now being adapted and applied across Africa. Similar agreements have yet to be drawn up with other geographical divisions.

2.7 The importance of a clear mutual understanding of the merits of CHAD's intervention in an emergency is especially important where regional divisions and country offices do not have the necessary specialist capacity to respond themselves. That capacity varies significantly across DFID:

- Some country offices have staff responsible for response work and groups monitoring events such as climatic changes as part of increased preparedness for future emergencies. For example, the DFID country team in Bangladesh has a Disaster Management Officer and Core Disaster Group made up of professionals from across the country office.
- Africa Great Lakes and Horn Department has one Humanitarian Advisor with responsibility for providing specialist advice to the entire humanitarian assistance programme for the region - including ongoing crises such as Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia; although the humanitarian nature of these programmes means that all staff become familiar with humanitarian issues.
- The West and North Africa Department does not have a humanitarian advisor despite the high propensity of its countries to suffer crises, such as Sierra Leone, although again staff are trained in humanitarian issues.

Specialist posts play an important role in monitoring early warning systems and co-ordinating preparedness and response activities.

2.8 Our discussion with DFID's partners highlighted the importance of adequate and dedicated humanitarian staff in helping to ensure the effective provision of relief. DFID's technical support is always highly valued, usually due to the quality of its staff (Figure 9). The deployment of CHAD's humanitarian expertise in southern Africa brought valuable skills such as increased capability in dealing with United Nations agencies and United Kingdom Ministers and undertaking information management and needs assessment. The CHAD team also took the lead in co-ordinating DFID's response at a regional level, which was praised for improving DFID's overall response to the crisis.

9 Comments by NGOs on DFID's strength in emergency response

"DFID's strengths are in emergency response and that comes from CHAD and CHAD's background and the people in CHAD, that's a definite strength."

"DFID do seem interested in very much what we're doing, the detail of the medical programmes and that's come across, they've had people that not just read the reports and understand the reports but ask the right questions."

"[DFID] is the only donor to have taken regional coordination seriously and to be involved and help us take decisions and being a partner..which none of the other donors have done."

Source: National Audit Office focus groups with NGOs in India, Sudan and southern Africa

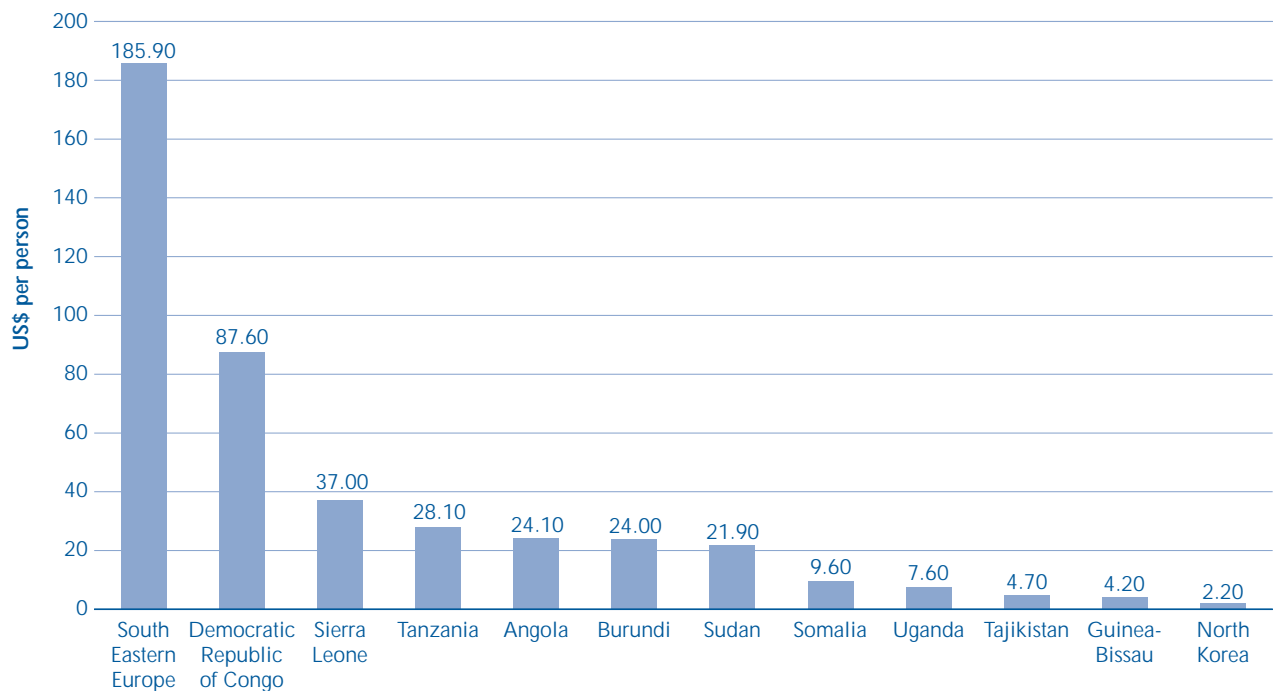
Matching assistance to need

2.9 A key problem for DFID in ensuring that its interventions are effective is that there is no uniform system for collecting data on and measuring humanitarian need. Judgement and estimation are therefore an inherent part of the needs assessment process. A study by the Overseas Development Institute, a leading independent think-tank on international development and humanitarian issues, illustrates the judgemental nature of needs assessment. In protracted crises like that in southern Sudan, malnutrition rates of 20 per cent of the population or higher are commonplace, 10 per cent higher than what is considered acceptable by international standards. But, in Sudan, rates below 18 per cent do not precipitate a response and are interpreted as 'normal', although they

are considered intolerable elsewhere. In southern Africa, malnutrition rates have been comparatively normal, between 4 and 7 per cent of the population, despite an undoubted crisis of food security, and have triggered an international response<sup>8</sup>.

2.10 DFID recognises that without a global measure of humanitarian needs, it cannot say whether the level of response or share it allocates to a particular crisis compared with another is appropriate. Nor can it establish whether its overall humanitarian assistance is compliant with its stated principle of targeting its humanitarian assistance to those in most need. Our discussion with DFID's NGO partners in the course of the study highlighted this as a common concern not just with DFID, but also with international donors in general (Figure 10).

10 Bilateral humanitarian assistance per affected person (US\$ per person), 2000



Source: Overseas Development Institute

8 Overseas Development Institute, 2003. Measuring Humanitarian Need. A critical review of needs assessment practice and its influence on resource allocation. Preliminary Findings Paper.

- 2.11 DFID's own analysis reveals that, since 1997, the per capita level of humanitarian assistance it has provided in European emergencies has been five times higher than for emergencies in Africa. The analysis concluded that this large variation could not be explained by differences in cost of delivery and associated security factors alone and may reflect a bias of resource distribution to more 'strategic' countries rather than 'non-strategic' countries.
- 2.12 DFID is working with other donors and agencies to support steps to provide a more reliable and universal assessment of humanitarian need through initiatives such as the Humanitarian Finance Work Programme based in Geneva. This is examining the degree to which official international humanitarian assistance is allocated according to need, and is seeking to establish a clear definition of and measurement system for humanitarian need. Its findings will be taken forward by the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative.
- 2.13 DFID supports the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Co-ordination system which aims to ensure that disaster experts arrive quickly to undertake rapid assessments of need and co-ordinate the international response. If necessary, CHAD also considers sending out its own small assessment team to provide additional information before committing financial, material and human resources to a crisis. In some cases, this role is also played by country offices. At the onset of a crisis in Bangladesh, for example, standing arrangements have been put in place for joint assessment teams made up of DFID and other donors, and partner organisations, to be deployed to make assessments of need. The results inform a Disasters and Emergency Response group representing donors, which use this and information from other sources to form the basis of a consolidated assessment.
- 2.14 In many cases, DFID also relies on information gathered by NGOs and other partners. Such information is often geographically limited and may focus on only one sector of need such as water and sanitation, health or shelter. The credibility of assessment again relies on the quality of data and skills and judgement of assessors (Figure 11). In the southern Africa crisis, NGOs picked up the start of the crisis before the established but weak monitoring systems did. The Overseas Development Institute reported that weak macro-level analysis combined with geographically limited micro-level assessments by NGOs does not provide a co-ordinated assessment strategy and that '*too often, the system has been galvanized into action by the results of one or two NGO surveys conducted on a small scale*', as in the case of Malawi in late 2001.<sup>9</sup> Our examination of project proposals by DFID's partners also showed that the data on which needs assessment was based was often variable and did not always provide sufficient evidence to support the assertions made.

## Selecting interventions and partners

- 2.15 The assessment of needs helps to define the overall scale and type of intervention that is appropriate. But detailed decisions over the choice of partners, scale of funding of each partner, and precise specification of the intervention remain to be made. DFID's emergencies funding for United Nations agencies is usually made in response to the United Nations' consolidated appeal - which combines the needs established by all the relevant United Nations agencies. DFID decides on the scale of its support after considering the timeliness, realism and quality of prioritisation of a particular appeal. An appeal does not guarantee funding from DFID or other international donors: on average, appeals only generate up to 40 per cent of the funds being sought. And in some cases, the response can be significantly lower: the United Nations' 2003 appeal for Liberia, for US\$25.3 million to assist victims of conflict, had, by May 2003 attracted only US\$5.1 million, or 20 per cent of the amount sought.
- 2.16 The attractions of United Nations agencies centre on their political legitimacy, their ability to handle large-scale logistical operations and their experience in politically sensitive countries. United Nations agencies, however, are often more expensive than direct funding of local NGOs, because of their management overhead: in food distribution, for example, the World Food Programme sub-contract local distribution of food to the same NGOs that DFID might fund directly. Indigenous community-based NGOs have good local knowledge, which enables them to identify and distribute assistance to the most vulnerable, and usually have lean costs. But they lack a degree of political influence and expertise. And they are often inexperienced in preparing project proposals, financial management and monitoring. For these reasons, DFID often fund international NGOs who then deal with local partners - again adding a degree of extra cost in return for broader humanitarian expertise and reduced fiduciary risk.
- 2.17 Mechanisms to co-ordinate donor activities are a critical element in securing an effective humanitarian response (Figure 12). The creation of the United Nations' Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance to take on this role signifies the importance of the issue. But the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance was not present in all the countries we visited. Sometimes, the host Government played a key co-ordinating role, as in responses to the Gujarat earthquake and Orissa cyclone. In other instances, DFID country staff were instrumental in creating informal donor forums to aid co-ordination. In Bangladesh, the Disasters and Emergency Response group has brought together international donors, government and NGOs to promote better operational

<sup>9</sup> Overseas Development Institute, 2003. *Measuring Humanitarian Need. A critical review of needs assessment practice and its influence on resource allocation. Preliminary Findings Paper.*

## 11 Example illustrating problems in the reliability of needs assessment data

In the lead up to and during the crisis in southern Africa key indicators of need were the regional and national vulnerability assessments carried out by the southern African Development Community's (SADC) Vulnerability Assessment Committees. This system was established in 2000 to institutionalise vulnerability assessment work in the region to allow for better targeting of interventions.

However, DFID has expressed doubts as to the reliability and consistency of the assessments being carried out by the Vulnerability Assessment Committees throughout the southern Africa humanitarian crisis. A key concern is the mixture of different approaches and methodologies being used by the different National Committees, which presents a challenge for decision makers like DFID in trying to prioritise interventions on a country by country basis. DFID is working with SADC to improve this process and remove the associated risks.

*Source: National Audit Office interviews with DFID staff*

## 12 NGO comments on the importance of co-ordination in disaster response

"...lots of people all doing the same things and overlapping with each other even though funding for several came from DFID ... so there was a lack of co-ordination."

"There's a whole bunch of NGOs running around doing assessments and we try to do some co-ordination and often it's successful but it can get a bit blocked up in some areas."

"There's always a large push for NGO co-ordination but if there was greater donor co-ordination donors could sit together at the beginning and say 'looks like there's an emergency, this is what we will do' and 'this is what we will do' and so we'd have an idea of what was going on."

"DFID has taken the strongest co-ordination role of any donor, in terms of being visible, in terms of being in the region, it's a totally different approach."

*Source: National Audit Office focus groups with NGOs in Bangladesh, Sierra Leone and southern Africa*

systems and ensure a more co-ordinated response to disasters - particularly floods. Co-ordination is also valuable because many bilateral projects arise from unsolicited proposals from NGOs, which may be put to several donors, as opposed to responses to invitations from donors.

2.18 DFID's choices on delivery partners reflected local circumstances and a willingness to adopt a flexible approach. However, the need for speed and flexibility in responding to the changing nature of the crisis; and the fact that the choice of partners can be limited at times can make it difficult to assess the effectiveness or cost-effectiveness of the different routes through which to channel assistance. In the case of the southern Africa humanitarian crisis, for example, DFID judged that supplementary feeding programmes, targeted at children and other vulnerable groups, were needed. DFID funded these programmes in areas of need, but mainly reflecting areas where it had previously been engaged in development work. DFID's choice of implementing partners was limited, because it wanted to use NGOs with appropriate local experience - meaning that sometimes there was only one suitably

qualified NGO in each area. In this type of situation, normal processes - such as competition or option appraisal - for assessing the cost-effectiveness of different courses of action could not be used. Notwithstanding such difficulties, the need to extract maximum humanitarian benefit from the available funding remains. So identifying, as far as is possible, the strengths and risks associated with different funding routes, is still important. Currently, DFID does not have guidelines to help country teams do this.

2.19 The pace of response required for a rapid-onset disaster militates against the creation of formal strategies. But for slow-onset and complex emergencies, a strategy can help with the co-ordination of responses, communication with partners and the selection of a cost-effective package of activities. DFID had prepared position or strategy papers outlining the basis for several of their humanitarian programmes. While these papers gave a clear view of what was proposed, they gave little insight into why such interventions would be effective, or cost-effective. And they did not address the sort of issues raised above. As a result, there was no overview of DFID's humanitarian interventions that dealt with effectiveness or cost-

effectiveness issues or set key indicators for achievements - and therefore no good basis for subsequent monitoring and evaluation of performance.

## Evaluating humanitarian responses

2.20 Evaluations should play an important role within a broader framework of monitoring to identify lessons learned and help to ensure that DFID's future responses are effective. Since 1996, DFID's Evaluation Department's role in evaluating humanitarian assistance has been substantially reduced due to limited capacity, and much of this work has shifted to operational departments like CHAD and country offices. Since 1997, according to ALNAP<sup>10</sup>, only one centrally commissioned study has been produced: an evaluation in 1999 of DFID's response to the volcanic eruption on Montserrat. Of the interventions we examined during the course of this study, only DFID's country team in Bangladesh has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of its own response. The remaining evaluations do not take a strategic view on DFID's humanitarian responses, but focus on the work of a particular partner or aspect of the overall response.

2.21 CHAD and country teams have undertaken a number of internal lesson learning activities, based on limited records. Consequently, they have not provided sufficient depth and information on the efficiency or effectiveness of humanitarian responses. We reviewed a number of such internal memoranda, for example, that on southern Africa. DFID stated that, although there had been less formal evaluation, this more timely type of learning was becoming more widespread.

2.22 In our discussions with DFID's NGO partners, they identified feedback about their performance and implications for future policy as an area for improvement. DFID has consulted NGOs through organisations such as the British Agencies Afghanistan Group<sup>11</sup> and the Disasters Emergency Committee<sup>12</sup>. And once the crisis had begun in Iraq, DFID established a formal mechanism for group dialogue with NGOs involved in providing humanitarian assistance in that country. Our discussions with the organisations attending these meetings on the crisis in Iraq highlighted their appreciation of this method of communication through the weekly meetings hosted by CHAD. The meetings provided an opportunity for DFID to feed back on policy issues, discuss on-going and emerging needs, share information with and monitor progress of organisations involved in delivering humanitarian assistance on the ground. Notwithstanding these examples of consultation, the partners we spoke to hoped that DFID would provide more feedback about their performance in relation to other humanitarian interventions NGOs were involved in.

2.23 DFID's partners noted the limited extent to which DFID was prepared to fund evaluation of their projects, aside from the monitoring report it required them to submit. Our discussion with an NGO in Sierra Leone explained the problem to us as *"if you're doing post-project evaluation it is beyond the life of the institutional grant and therefore that has to be funded from other sources. We do not have a set of funds which we can just draw on to do that kind of useful work. [Impact] is very difficult to assess and donors usually request it in terms of 'what have you accomplished?'"*. However, the evaluation of individual humanitarian responses may not be useful or cost-effective because of the interconnectedness of interventions by many humanitarian agencies, especially in complex emergencies<sup>13</sup>. In this context it would be better to build the collection of improved data into funding contracts. These data could then be used in evaluations of collective responses to humanitarian emergencies.

10 Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

11 The British Agencies Afghanistan Group was set up by British NGOs in 1987 as an umbrella group to draw public attention to the humanitarian needs of the population of Afghanistan and of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

12 The Disasters Emergency Committee, set up in 1963, is an umbrella organisation of British aid agencies which launches and co-ordinates the United Kingdom's National Appeal in response to major disasters overseas.

13 Borton J and J Macrae (1997), *Evaluation Synthesis of Emergency Aid*, DFID Evaluation Report EV 613.

# Part 3

## Linking emergency response and longer-term development

*"Linking relief, rehabilitation and development involves a debate about the very essence of humanitarian aid, its purpose, scope and effectiveness"*

**ActionAid Alliance, Improving European Development Cooperation: The Link Between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development, January 2003**

3.1 This Part considers the challenges DFID faces in successfully integrating its humanitarian and developmental activities. In its 2002 Annual Review of humanitarian action, ALNAP reported that linkages between relief and development remained weak in most humanitarian operations and that the transition between the two presented a persistent problem<sup>14</sup>. In this Part we find that DFID requires effective strategies for integrating relief and development, that organisational arrangements can hamper this integration, and that the often short-term nature of humanitarian funding does not always enable longer-term issues to be taken into account.

### Managing the interface between relief and development

3.2 An issue raised frequently in our fieldwork, both by DFID and partners, was that of identifying where humanitarian assistance ends and longer-term assistance to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country begins (Figure 13). Also, in countries affected by humanitarian emergencies

DFID has been seeking to address the grey area between the two types of assistance. DFID's humanitarian assistance policy statement recognises the need for a comprehensive approach, having as one of its key aims to "...hasten recovery, and protect and rebuild livelihoods and communities ..."<sup>15</sup>.

3.3 During our fieldwork we found that DFID compared well with other donors in handling the interface between "humanitarian" and "development" assistance, often due to DFID's willingness to be flexible with funding and to consider the broader picture during a response. However, the distinction between humanitarian and development assistance was not always constructive for implementing partners in framing their response to a crisis. A common concern amongst NGOs was that funding with a humanitarian label was only available for specific, short-term relief activities and that development funding targeted a different set of longer-term issues. Consequently, NGOs were sometimes concerned that the "middle ground" was being overlooked.

#### 13 Identifying the distinction between relief and development can be difficult

"I don't want to get into a debate over the definitions between 'development' and 'relief'; they're sometimes very grey.."

"...probably you do need to have the humanitarian-development distinction, and it's useful to have emergency specialists, but very important to link the two.."

"...that separation between 'development' and 'humanitarian', there needs to be something in the middle and we're at that point in this country, I think, where it needs to shift to that middle place, to be responsible in responding and caring for Zambia.."

Source: National Audit Office focus groups with NGOs in Sudan and southern Africa

14 ALNAP Annual Review 2002. Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.  
15 DFID Policy Statement, 1999, conflict reduction and humanitarian assistance.



3.4 DFID's country team in Zimbabwe has identified the significance of addressing this middle ground as a key issue in alleviating the problems currently being experienced in the country. They have approached it by moving towards a "humanitarian plus" agenda, described as a "longer-term humanitarian assistance". This programme includes traditional humanitarian responses (e.g. feeding programmes), but also supports more developmental areas such as agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizers). Such approaches have also been adopted in countries like Afghanistan where DFID supported a national project to get schools running again, encouraging four million children into the education system over one year and expanding school water and sanitation facilities. Once running, schools became the focal point of the community. Flexible approaches of this sort are useful in responding to complex new situations in which humanitarian problems are likely to prevail for some years.

## Maintaining a safe and secure environment for humanitarian assistance

3.5 A crucial element of many responses is the need to establish "humanitarian space" in which aid agencies can work and victims of emergencies recover. The issue of security is particularly relevant, although not limited to, humanitarian emergencies resulting from conflict. DFID is often active in securing that humanitarian space. And in these cases DFID is often not the only United Kingdom government department involved - the Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office also have interests in, and sometimes responsibilities for, security. The current intervention in Iraq is a good example of the importance of a secure environment for the successful implementation of relief and reconstruction (**Figure 14**).

3.6 Where a situation has led to peacekeeping efforts, DFID may provide a financial contribution. In Sudan, for example, DFID has funded cease-fire monitoring in the Nuba Mountains, as well as supporting United Nations Security Teams to open up other areas of the country to the provision of aid through the United Nations Development Programme in the North and the United Nations Children's Fund in the South. In other cases, British troops have represented a contribution in kind, as in the Balkans. British forces may also be part of an occupying power, as currently in Iraq, with associated legal obligations which include the protection of inhabitants and humanitarian workers. When DFID contributes to peacekeeping efforts its intention is to help save lives and reduce misery - squarely in line with humanitarian policy, even if not funded through humanitarian channels.

3.7 When British forces are involved, they often undertake activities which have a humanitarian impact - repairing or reconstructing utilities, helping with aid logistics, dealing with mines and unexploded ordnance. But their activities may be motivated by broader objectives than purely humanitarian ones, as in the case of 'hearts and minds' operations, which will not necessarily proceed on the basis of recognised humanitarian principles. DFID's humanitarian partners are always concerned that involvement of the military in humanitarian assistance may jeopardise the impartiality and needs-based focus of their efforts. The blurring of lines between civilian and military providers of humanitarian assistance can in turn restrict humanitarian access and endanger the lives of aid workers. In Iraq, one Red Cross member was killed in crossfire; and Iraqi authorities detained two volunteers from NGO Médecins Sans Frontières for nine days. In Afghanistan it was noted that in the absence of law and order there is a danger that aid agencies will become a target for violence<sup>16</sup>. The risk to aid workers is substantial - between 1997 and 2001, 141 aid workers were killed in acts of violence, with almost half as a result of ambushes on vehicles or convoys<sup>17</sup>. Even where attempts have been made to provide a distinction between civilian and military provision of humanitarian assistance, the risks to aid workers can be high, as illustrated by the attack on the United Nations headquarters in Iraq, which was situated outside the Coalition Forces' compound in Baghdad.

<sup>16</sup> International Development Committee, *The Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan and the Surrounding Region*, HC 300-I, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Overseas Development Institute (2002). *Paying the Ultimate Price: an analysis of aid-worker fatalities*. [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

## 14 Addressing humanitarian needs in Iraq: relief and reconstruction

Increasingly DFID is being required to provide humanitarian assistance associated with military interventions involving United Kingdom forces. The lead time in this type of emergency may allow for significant contingency planning by DFID in order to prepare for the implications of any such action. A key message from the intervention in Iraq is the need to prioritise, plan and resource security, humanitarian and reconstruction work so that each is successful.

### Planning for relief and reconstruction

DFID considered a range of possible consequences and likely associated emergency requirements in its planning for the humanitarian impacts of potential military action in Iraq. DFID also fed into the cross-Whitehall planning process, for example liaising with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in developing contingency plans. We found that DFID had been collating information on the humanitarian situation in Iraq and actively considering contingency plans for the aftermath of an intervention more than six months prior to the conflict. The range of potential consequences of military action considered included large scale loss of life, mass population displacements, heightened vulnerability, infrastructure damage, urban warfare, internal and regional unrest, and the possible use of biological and chemical weapons by the Iraqi Government. DFID identified likely emergency requirements including food, health, water, sanitation and shelter, as well as information, logistics and protection. Much of DFID's scenario planning was not documented, however, and was therefore unavailable for review.

The Select Committee on International Development concluded that "insufficient emphasis" had been placed on the humanitarian implications of military intervention, and that the United Kingdom Government had been reluctant to plan openly for fear that this would be condoning military action or accepting it as inevitable<sup>18</sup>. Also, although DFID was in contact with non-NGO partners the British Red Cross and the United Nations prior to military intervention, we found that some NGO partners felt sidelined in the pre-conflict period - although they did acknowledge the political pressures on DFID not to be seen to be planning openly for war. Once military action began, constraints on communicating with partners were removed and DFID held regular meetings with the NGOs to give briefings and share information.

Within days of the military intervention the United Kingdom Government responded by making over £200 million available under a humanitarian label. As at 26 September 2003 DFID had agreed funding of over £160 million towards the humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, including more than £10 million to meet the costs of DFID advisers in the region. Amounts committed by DFID have largely been channelled through its major partners, £64 million and £32 million respectively in response to appeals from United Nations and Red Cross agencies, with smaller amounts going through NGOs. DFID personnel committed to the region include advisers located in Baghdad and Basra to work, inter alia, with the Coalition Provisional Authority, the United Nations, humanitarian agencies and the United Kingdom armed forces.

One of the four key aims of DFID's humanitarian approach in Iraq was to "support a rapid transition from relief to recovery", to be achieved by "designing humanitarian interventions that take account of longer-term recovery and reconstruction issues". The need for emergency relief operations was, fortunately, lower than anticipated, but the occupying powers and international community encountered problems creating a secure environment for a successful transition to recovery to take place. DFID has acknowledged that mistakes were made in the anticipation of what the problems were going to be, and that more planning could have covered issues such as lack of security which turned out to be important<sup>19</sup>.

### The Reconstruction Phase

While DFID had identified possible areas for consideration during the reconstruction phase beforehand, it did not develop its reconstruction planning until after conflict began and the situation on the ground in Iraq began to unfold. The reconstruction process in Iraq was slow to get started and encountered significant obstacles and setbacks to a smooth implementation, notably the ongoing insecurity and sabotage.

DFID had contributed around £40 million specifically towards reconstruction as at 26 September 2003, including £20 million towards improving service delivery in the power, fuel and water sectors in southern Iraq. DFID also funded the United Nations Development Programme's rehabilitation work in the electricity sector and supported the Office of the United Nations Security Co-ordinator's provision of a common, co-ordinated approach to security for the United Nations agencies. A DFID operational review identified mixed progress by the organisations in receipt of DFID funds. Agencies reported as making slow progress tended to attribute this to the lack of security, although other issues included lack of co-ordination and lack of appropriate staffing.

### DFID's work with the Ministry of Defence

Interventions such as the one in Iraq clearly require DFID to work successfully with the military, with its increasing engagement in humanitarian assistance. A joint DFID-Ministry of Defence lesson-learning exercise performed after the intervention in Afghanistan identified "the absence of agreed inter-Departmental procedures for planning a joint co-ordinated response to complex emergencies requiring humanitarian assistance" and that "neither DFID nor MOD had developed a formalised, cross-Departmental approach or policy for Civil-Military Co-operation in complex emergencies". During much of the Iraq crisis DFID had three staff advising the United Kingdom armed forces in Basra on civil-military relations and the technical aspects of humanitarian and reconstruction operations which the military were undertaking as part of the United Kingdom's obligations as an occupying power under the Hague and Geneva conventions. The performance of DFID's embedded staff has been praised by Ministry of Defence officials, but there is still room for improved communication and coordination in joint operations involving the Ministry of Defence and DFID.

*Sources: National Audit Office review of DFID planning documentation; discussions with DFID, Ministry of Defence, British Red Cross and NGO officials; House of Commons International Development Committee, Preparing for the Humanitarian Consequences of Possible Military Action Against Iraq, Fourth Report of Session 2002-03, Volume I, HC 444-I; DFID/Ministry of Defence Civil-Military Co-operation During the Crisis in Afghanistan: A Lessons Study, 25 March 2003; Secretary of State for International Development in oral evidence to the International Development Committee, 30 June 2003; and DFID Iraq Update No 56, 26 September 2003.*

18 House of Commons International Development Committee, Preparing for the Humanitarian Consequences of Possible Military Action Against Iraq, Fourth Report of Session 2002-03, Volume I, HC 444-I.

19 Secretary of State for International Development in oral evidence to the International Development Committee, 30 June 2003.

3.8 DFID also provides assistance to help secure the orderly repatriation of refugees, and demilitarisation and rehabilitation of ex-combatants. DFID was the lead international donor in Sierra Leone and a major supporter of government programmes to deal with these issues (Figure 15). These programmes were a key element in progressing the recovery of the country from civil war: unless the rural hinterland was made safe, doctors, nurses, teachers and other professionals vital to recovery would not return. Security issues also feature in longer-term plans. In Sierra Leone, DFID funded programmes to help train the army and police forces, so that security would be maintained as United Nations forces withdrew. In doing so, they attempted to inculcate the humanitarian principles set out in International Humanitarian Law. In Sudan, similar work was carried out through funding of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

## Working with partners

3.9 Another key factor in facilitating the provision of effective transitional aid is that DFID needs to be open in communicating its strategy to partner organisations. This enables partners to understand the position and role DFID is adopting in a country and to plan accordingly. We found that DFID's NGO partners in Sierra Leone experienced difficulties knowing what type of support would be available from DFID as the country moved from humanitarian assistance into rehabilitation and reconstruction work. DFID has been slow in publicising its formal strategy for the country (Figure 16).

### 15 Promoting security in Sierra Leone - assisting the transition to development

DFID has been the principal bilateral donor to Sierra Leone in recent years, providing assistance both during and since the civil war that began in 1991. DFID suspended assistance to Sierra Leone from May 1997 to March 1998 following an illegal coup, although it continued to support the ousted government in exile. This led some in the humanitarian community to accuse DFID of restricting humanitarian aid in pursuit of United Kingdom political objectives, an accusation denied by DFID in evidence to the Select Committee on International Development<sup>20</sup>. DFID provided over £100 million of assistance between 1999-00 and 2001-02. DFID worked closely with the British High Commission, United Nations and NGO partners on the ground to monitor the security situation in the country. Since the formal declaration of peace in January 2002, DFID has been providing support in numerous ways to reduce the risk of a return to conflict, including:

- Assistance to Government of Sierra Leone in carrying out its Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme;
- Community reintegration programme to provide occupations to ex-combatants and displaced people returning to communities;
- Technical support to the Government of Sierra Leone in developing its National Recovery Strategy; and
- Police project and army training.

These strategies are aimed at underpinning security, essential in building up the confidence needed for people to return to their communities and begin rebuilding livelihoods. The United Kingdom Government has now entered into a ten year "Poverty Reduction Framework Agreement" with the Government of Sierra Leone, committing DFID to a contribution of £120 million over the first three years (2002-2005), subject to progress being made against agreed benchmarks. These benchmarks include ensuring that the Government of Sierra Leone's position is represented in international forums in support of conflict reduction and post-conflict reconstruction, and also continued support to reform of the security sector.



Skills training in the form of tailoring and scrap metal recycling: DFID funded Community Reintegration Programme, Bombali District, Sierra Leone

Source: DFID; and Government Response to the Sixth Report of the Select Committee on International Development, Session 1998-99, HC 840

## 16 Comments from NGOs about DFID's strategy communication

"..DFID, of all the major donors, seem to have this rather, I'd say 'confused' but that's maybe unfair, but unclear to us, it's not transparent because we can't see what's going on. Maybe they're absolutely clear on their strategy and what they're doing - but would [they] tell us please because then we'll stop being anxious about it."

"..for us the challenge is understanding how we can fit in..and that's been difficult because they [DFID] started working on their strategy 3 years ago and it still hasn't come out in a public forum, where we can say 'okay, that's where we can fit in, that's what we can use'..."

*Source: National Audit Office focus groups with NGOs in southern Sudan and Sierra Leone*

## 17 Partner perceptions on the advantages of multi-year funding

"..three year memorandum of understanding, which is very useful..I think it's called Strategic Institutional Partnerships - and this mechanism..allows us to take on the different protection activities without being constrained by project proposals and so on for each and every branch of funding.."

"..the stuff we're doing is tending to be a 3-5 year cycle and..some sort of indication as to the ability for DFID to fund [over longer periods] would be useful..at the moment it's still very much year to year and we're finding ..it makes life very difficult to plan on longer-term programmes if there is no indication beyond a year..."

"you're going to find in a number of countries, where you've got a long protracted civil war, similar things are happening and the donors, as a group, all need to start addressing themselves to this problem because otherwise they just get tied up in this business of 'which funding line am I using?'. Well if you're actually trying to achieve both humanitarian assistance and development you've got to understand that they're not mutually exclusive."

*Source: National Audit Office focus groups with multilateral partners and non-governmental organisations in Sierra Leone and Sudan*

3.10 The joint DFID-FCO Sudan Unit has developed an Approach Paper setting out its strategy for transitional assistance in Sudan. This had been successfully communicated to multilateral partners, and for example UNICEF praised DFID for the support being given to education projects. However, at the time of our visit we found that some NGOs in southern Sudan were uncertain of DFID's strategy, and how the transition would be made from purely humanitarian assistance to longer-term considerations once peace is secured (Figure 16). During the Iraq intervention DFID posted an 'Interim Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Strategy' on its website, as well as holding weekly meetings with non-governmental organisation partners. This action was appreciated by partners, improving information sharing and transparency, and assisted them in designing their own strategies and funding proposals.

3.11 Humanitarian crises by their nature tend to lend themselves to relatively short-term funding from donors, including DFID, although DFID is not institutionally constrained in the way that some other donors are in this. United Nations agencies in Sierra Leone commented that one result of having separate funding streams for humanitarian and development assistance is that implementing agencies may define their projects according to which category of funding is more likely to be available, rather than according to which is

actually most appropriate. DFID's partners with Institutional Strategy Papers (which set out for each of the institutions concerned the framework for DFID's partnership with those organisations in order to achieve international development goals) indicated that this enabled them to plan more effectively for recovery and rehabilitation (Figure 17).

3.12 Our review of contract lengths in the countries we visited identified that relatively few projects were initially funded for longer than twelve months. This reflects DFID practice (as set out in its Guidelines on Humanitarian Assistance) that most projects for rapid-onset disasters will be a maximum of six months duration - for example, as seen in the Gujarat response. However, a number of the projects we examined have been extended, or renewed for subsequent years, indicating that there may be potential for greater use of the provision in DFID's Guidelines for longer-term funding, of one to three years, from the outset of a project. NGO partners who we interviewed welcomed DFID's willingness to provide repeat funding on a year by year basis, but some indicated that greater availability of multi-year funding from the outset (whether on an institutional basis, or restricted to specific humanitarian and recovery projects) would be beneficial in enabling a smoother transition back to development.

3.13 Of the NGOs to which DFID provides funding, the largest share goes to United Kingdom based organisations such as the British Red Cross, CARE UK and Save the Children UK. DFID provides funds to NGOs mainly through short term accountable grants for individual projects of up to one year. Our discussions with DFID's partners found that although serving to improve accountability, contractual relations and management procedures have become increasingly complex and resource intensive, especially for smaller organisations. Partners recognised, however, that DFID's contractual requirements were more straightforward and flexible than other international donors.

3.14 DFID has employed a number of innovative funding methods, which have been well-received by partners. The most common type are Partnership Programme Agreements which are similar to Institutional Strategy Papers. These three to five year agreements seek to respond to the burden of individual contractual relations and provide for more strategic relations with some NGOs. Currently, however, only two Partnership Programme Agreements, out of the fifteen which have

been drawn up, include specific goals for humanitarian assistance. This circumstance reflects the fact that NGOs have objectives other than providing humanitarian assistance, although these Agreements are intended to reflect the priorities of DFID as well as its partners. The Agreements have proved particularly useful for NGOs situated in countries where there is a protracted crisis or where disasters are more frequent and they wish to maintain a longer-term presence.

3.15 Another example of an innovative funding method used by DFID is its block funding of the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières in Sudan, (Figure 18) where three different projects have been funded through one DFID grant. Médecins Sans Frontières praised DFID for adopting this approach since the agreement had given them greater flexibility to allocate funding throughout the one year funding period based on the changing needs that it identified, with the result that DFID funds are being better targeted towards need.

**18** One of Médecins Sans Frontières' Sudan projects (Lankien, Southern Sudan)



*A clinic treating tuberculosis*



*A clinic treating Kala Azar, a severe parasitic disease*



*A therapeutic feeding centre for malnourished children*



*Distribution of blankets, mosquito nets and feeding jugs to inpatients of the clinics*

Source: National Audit Office visit to Sudan

# Part 4

## Avoiding and minimising the impact of humanitarian emergencies

*"Reducing disaster vulnerability in developing countries may very well be the most critical challenge facing development in the new millennium"*

**James Wolfensohn, President, World Bank and Didier Cherpitel, Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross in ProVention Consortium Article: "Why we need to do what we are doing".**

4.1 This Part covers the role of prevention, preparedness and mitigation in responding to the risks posed by natural and man-made humanitarian disasters. It considers DFID's approach to disaster reduction and concludes that whilst more attention has begun to be paid to its importance; we remain unclear as to whether many country teams have actively assessed its impact on vulnerability and longer-term development.

### The importance of disaster and conflict reduction

**Disaster reduction:** *"The systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) adverse impact of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development"*

#### **United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

4.2 Poverty leaves people more exposed to natural and man-made disasters at the same time as making them less able to cope. The result is that disasters can set back development advances that have been built up over the course of decades. DFID has identified that shocks (including conflict and natural disasters such as drought and floods) have the potential to seriously damage progress in poverty reduction and to prevent the Millennium Development Goals being achieved<sup>21</sup>. Evidence suggests that an increase in spending on preparedness and prevention activity before a disaster occurs can significantly reduce both the human and financial cost of a disaster and the amount of relief required. This, in turn, can release funds for longer-term development work. For example, the World Bank and United States Geological Survey calculated that an estimated US\$400 billion in economic losses worldwide caused by disasters during the 1990s could

have been reduced by US\$280 billion if only US\$40 billion had been invested in mitigation measures<sup>22</sup>. Further examples illustrating the potential value of disaster reduction are listed in Appendix 5.

### Reducing risks and vulnerability

4.3 One of the three main aims of DFID's humanitarian assistance policy is to "reduce risks and vulnerability to future crises"<sup>23</sup>, and the 1997 White Paper committed DFID to incorporating disaster preparedness and prevention into its development programme<sup>24</sup>. In 2000, CHAD began to develop a more strategic approach to programming with its £3 million annual disaster reduction budget through the support of a number of major international disaster reduction initiatives, for example the ProVention Consortium. This global coalition of governments, international and civil society organisations, academic institutions and the private sector was established to reduce the impact of disasters through education, public policy, pilot projects, linking stakeholders, and strengthening government capacities in developing countries. ProVention received £2.8 million from DFID over two years from April 2001 and has been making progress in numerous areas of disaster management, for example building up data on global risks and impacts of disasters. Due to the longer timeframe on some activities it is still too early to assess ProVention's wider impact.

4.4 DFID has also adopted innovative approaches at the country level to prevention, preparedness and mitigation programmes for "natural" disasters, as well as conflict reduction strategies for complex political emergencies. In particular, DFID has recognised the importance of improving the sustainability of livelihoods in order to reduce the vulnerability of people at risk from future disasters; and has highlighted the link between sustainable livelihoods and disaster risk reduction in guidance issued to country teams.

<sup>21</sup> DFID Strategies for achieving the international development targets: Halving world poverty by 2015 - economic growth, equity and security, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Dilley M, Heyman B N (1995), ENSO and Disaster: droughts, floods and El Nino/Southern Oscillation Warm Events, Disasters 19(3).

<sup>23</sup> DFID Policy Statement (1999): conflict reduction and humanitarian assistance.

<sup>24</sup> White Paper on International Development (1997), Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century, Cm 3789, London, The Stationery Office.

## 19 The 'Chars' project - halving extreme poverty in riverine areas of Bangladesh

The communities of the charlands, unstable islands and embankments along major rivers and coasts of Bangladesh, are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable in the country. Char communities suffer from seasonal flooding and erosion, and displacement is common. People face fluctuating access to productive land and their other resources, such as livestock, are also highly vulnerable.

DFID has allocated £50 million over eight years (2002-2009) for this programme with the goal of halving extreme poverty in the riverine areas of Bangladesh by 2015 and improving livelihood security for the poor and vulnerable. The programme is being developed with a number of key government ministries and agencies, NGOs and donor partners. A key component is aimed at countering vulnerability through support to social protection programmes such as flood-proofing and associated skills training.

### Disaster management and risk assessment

DFID undertook a disaster management study in April 2002 to identify practical ways to assist char dwellers in more effectively dealing with their exposure to flooding and other risks. This included an assessment of the costs and effectiveness of the different options being proposed. Following the study and risk assessment DFID has built disaster risk management and preparedness into the programme from the design stage.

The programme seeks ways to improve the effectiveness of char dwellers livelihood strategies without undermining their existing ability to manage the risks of their environment. DFID is pursuing two strategies: reducing vulnerability of char dwellers to shocks (eg. by raising homesteads to offer greater protection from flooding); and reducing the risks associated with shocks (for example, by improving health care services). DFID's areas of intervention also include local governance strengthening, building the capacity of disaster management committees, and social mobilisation activities.

### Project visit and beneficiary feedback

We visited an OXFAM project. Homesteads had been moved to, and a large flood shelter had been built on, a raised plateau. Temporary shelters, which could be stacked and opened out as needed, had also been provided. Out of flood season, some of these are used to house families, livestock and stores of grain, and the larger flood shelter was being used as a health/community centre. Beneficiaries indicated that the structures were easy to assemble and move, and that the project was meeting the needs of the community. Before the shelter was built, the community relied on boats to rescue them in times of flood and normally all possessions, including livestock, would be lost. We found that the flood shelters have now become a focal point for the community.

### Evaluation and Review

The DFID chars programme has an evaluation component which means that DFID will review it after four years. This in-built lesson-learning process will enable changes to the programme structure or design to be implemented in the light of experience gained.



Source: DFID papers and National Audit Office visit to Bangladesh

## Prioritisation of disaster preparedness

4.5 A 1998 study of emergency aid by DFID's Consultancy and Review Section found that work on disaster preparedness is best considered in the context of overall country strategies<sup>25</sup>. During visits to DFID country

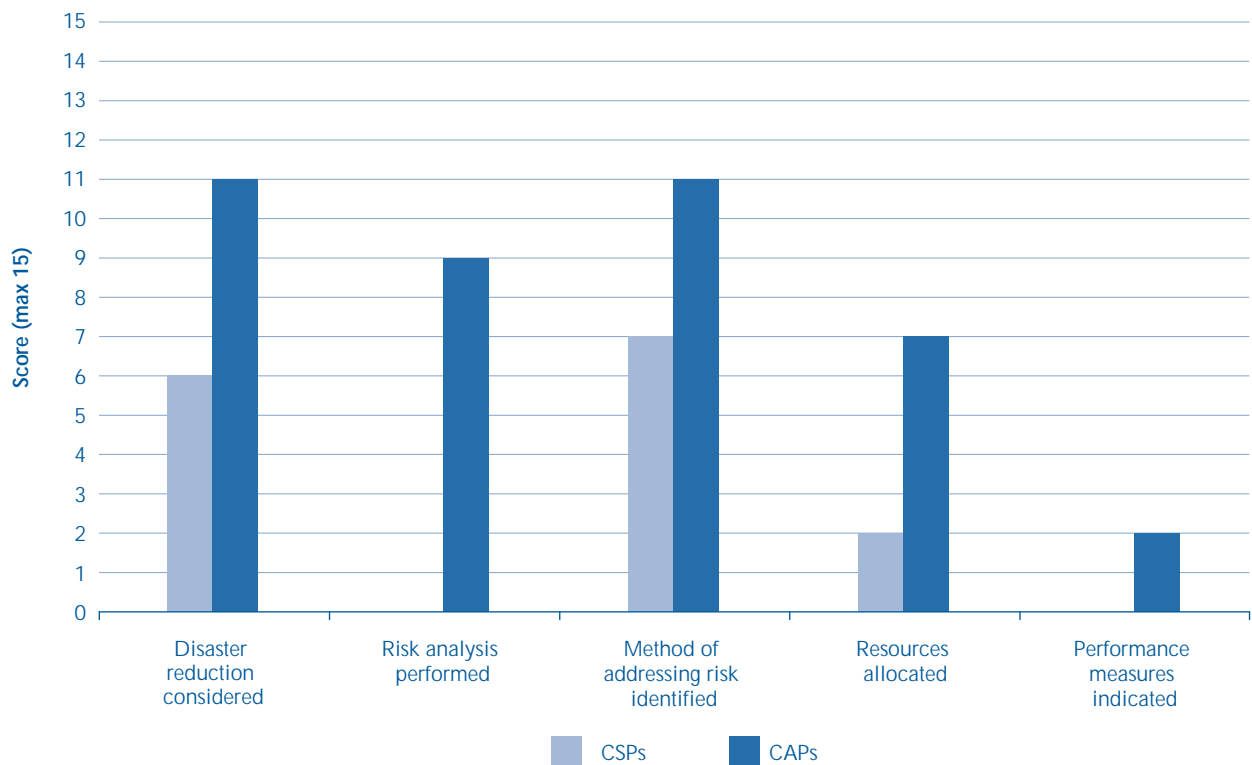
offices we identified examples of how DFID is working to reduce the risk of humanitarian suffering, such as the £50 million 'Chars' development project aimed at halving extreme poverty in the riverine areas of Bangladesh (Figure 19).

4.6 A 1997 DFID evaluation report concluded, however, that "Despite recent improvements in the use of Country Strategy Papers as a tool for the development of disaster and humanitarian response strategies, there still appears to be room for improvement in terms of the quality of Country Strategy Papers' coverage of such issues and in relation to regional emergencies"<sup>26</sup>. Also, the 1998 review found that "...geographical departments often do not have the time, the resources or the inclination to support disaster preparedness"<sup>27</sup>. In 2000, DFID-funded analysis indicated that of the eighteen most recently revised Country and Regional Strategy Papers for hazard-prone countries or regions, eleven recognised natural disasters as factors in their contextual analysis, but only five had risk reduction as a significant component of their plans and only one had a budget line specifically for mitigation and preparedness<sup>28</sup>. National Audit Office review of Country Strategy Papers for certain disaster-prone countries has found that these findings still ring true, with some country teams not considering disaster reduction to be a priority; explicit humanitarian and/or

disaster reduction issues featuring only marginally, and where they did so it was without any links to verifiable indicators of outcomes (Figure 20). For example, there is no mention of disasters in the India Country Strategy Paper. Similarly, the State Strategy Paper for Andhra Pradesh does not mention disaster reduction, reflecting DFID's view of the strength of the State government's disaster-preparedness and the fact that rapid-onset disasters have not had a major impact on the State's overall development. In contrast, the West Bengal and Orissa State Strategy Papers do recognise specifically the particular vulnerability of the poorest to disasters and shocks. Variations in the degree to which disaster reduction features explicitly in such strategies may reflect country team views on the level of priority needed. However, another contributing factor is the lack of promotion of disaster reduction at a policy level within DFID. There is an opportunity for this to be rectified by CHAD's review of humanitarian policy, ongoing at the time of writing this report, which intends to specifically incorporate a section on disaster reduction.

**20 Analysis of Country Strategy Papers and Country Assistance Plans for selected countries with recent experience of humanitarian emergencies**

Scores of between 0 and 3 inclusive were awarded against the stated criteria according to the degree to which plans illustrated the consideration and coverage given by DFID to disaster reduction



Source: Based on NAO review of five Country Strategy Papers and five final or draft Country Assistance Plans

26 Borton J and Macrae J (1997), DFID Evaluation Synthesis of Emergency Aid.  
 27 Mosselmans (1998), Consultancy and Review Section Study of Emergency Aid Department.  
 28 Twigg J, Benson C, Myers M, Steiner D (2000), NGO Natural Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Projects: A Study of International Development and Relief NGOs based in the UK.



4.7 The low profile of disaster reduction within some country teams may also be due to DFID not having formalised where responsibility lies for supporting disaster reduction initiatives by national governments, a fact reflected in our interviews with DFID staff. Disaster reduction is the responsibility of the governments of the countries concerned, with DFID providing support as appropriate. One obstacle to mainstreaming this support derives from it being viewed by some as a sub-set of humanitarian issues, and therefore the responsibility of CHAD. CHAD is consulted on the development of country planning documents and has an opportunity to influence their content, but ultimately country teams determine the extent to which disaster reduction, and indeed humanitarian issues in general, will be incorporated into their strategies. CHAD, who saw disaster reduction essentially as a development issue, indicated that speed of uptake at country level had been variable, and recognised that increasing this uptake was the most difficult challenge for DFID in stepping up its work in this area. Indeed, we found that although DFID's country team in Bangladesh had been more active than other country offices on this issue, in its own country strategy review carried out in 2002 it found that disaster preparedness was still "*not yet mainstreamed into activities*"<sup>29</sup>.

4.8 DFID is in the process of replacing Country Strategy Papers with new Country Assistance Plans. From a review of draft or final Country Assistance Plans for countries with recent experience of humanitarian emergencies, or documents relating to these Country Plans, we identified a rise in the profile of disaster reduction in comparison to the original Country Strategy Papers (Figure 19), but that scope remains for improvement in the quality of risk assessment and the degree to which the response is clearly linked to resource allocation and performance objectives. Good analysis does not necessarily mean that DFID has to take the lead in - or attach highest priority to - humanitarian risk mitigation. In some instances it may be appropriate for DFID, working as part of the international development effort, to allow and encourage others to take the lead, particularly national

governments and the United Nations. For example, in Bangladesh there are well established emergency preparedness mechanisms so the DFID office has focused more attention on longer term development issues that impact on livelihoods including tuberculosis, malnutrition and under-five mortality, whilst still finding room for some disaster reduction work on the basis of explicit consideration of risks. However, in some other countries we visited, it was less clear how risks had been assessed or, where they had been assessed, the extent to which the results had had an impact on the importance afforded to disaster reduction.

4.9 DFID does not publish a breakdown of humanitarian spending between reduction, response and recovery, and has stated that "it is difficult to itemise all prevention expenditure"<sup>30</sup>. This difficulty is due to its close relationship and overlap with other areas such as food security and sustainable rural livelihoods. Because of this, other than the £3 million allocated annually by CHAD, DFID was unable to provide an accurate figure for the amount spent on disaster reduction.

## Establishing the value of disaster preparedness

4.10 DFID recognises the potentially adverse impact on longer-term development if risks are not taken into account and acted upon. In June 2003 it commissioned research into summarising the available evidence on the relevance and impact of disaster reduction on achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In the conclusions to the June 2003 Stockholm 'International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship', donors, including DFID, stressed the need "*to promote capacities for prevention and preparedness*". This remains an area in which to seek improvements in the value for money of DFID's response to humanitarian emergencies, and thereby also in pursuit of the objective of meeting the Millennium Development Goal on poverty eradication.

29 A Review of DFID's Country Strategy for Bangladesh, CSP 1998-2002, DFID Bangladesh, 2002.

30 Baroness Amos, Hansard, 9 July 2003, p.268.

# Appendix 1

## Humanitarian principles

DFID's Principles for a New Humanitarianism	Internationally endorsed Principles and Good Practice in Humanitarian Donorship
We will seek always to uphold international humanitarian law and human rights laws and conventions	Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights
We will seek to promote a more universal approach in addressing humanitarian needs. People in need - wherever they are - should have equal status and rights to assistance	Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments
We will be impartial - our help will seek to relieve civilians' suffering without discrimination on political or other grounds, with priority given to the most urgent cases of distress	
We will seek the best possible assessment of needs, and a clear framework of standards and accountability for those who work to deliver DFID's assistance	
We will seek to work with others whose efforts are also aimed at tackling the underlying causes of a crisis and building peace and stability	Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and co-ordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in implementing humanitarian action
We will seek to work with other committed members of the international community and, in particular, seek partnership across the North/South divide to secure better international systems and mechanisms for timely joint humanitarian action	
We will encourage the participation of people and communities affected by crises to help them find long-lasting solutions which respect their rights and dignity	Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response
We will, where possible, seek to rebuild livelihoods and communities, and build capacity so that communities will be less vulnerable to future crises	Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities
We will agree 'ground rules' that prevent diversion of humanitarian goods and collusion with unconstitutional armed groups	<i>No similar principle</i>
We recognise that humanitarian intervention in conflict situations often poses genuine moral dilemmas. We will base our decisions on explicit analyses of the choices open to us and the ethical considerations involved, and communicate our conclusions openly to our partners	<i>No similar principle</i>
<i>No similar principle</i>	While re-affirming the primary responsibility of states for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs

# Appendix 2

## Criteria for pursuing cost-effective humanitarian assistance

DFID guidance on humanitarian emergencies provides little coverage of the need to consider whether the assistance proposed is the most cost-effective response. Circumstances often militate against detailed planning, and in favour of rapid action. But in all circumstances some consideration is appropriate of whether the proposed response maximises the impact of assistance. And, for slow-onset emergencies for which strategy papers are prepared, there are some key issues which such papers should address. The following criteria provide an indication of issues that should be covered.

### Is DFID action based on an adequate assessment of need?

- What is the quality of evidence on the current humanitarian status, and how reliable are projections of future needs?
- Does the available information enable intervention to be targeted at the most vulnerable?
- Can the developing situation, and effectiveness of intervention, be monitored?

### Is DFID's strategic response appropriately scaled and set within an adequate assessment of the responses of others?

- How has DFID's contribution been assessed? Is it in line with DFID's humanitarian principles?
- Has DFID's response been co-ordinated with others to avoid duplication and ensure there are no avoidable gaps in assistance?
- Have options for the scale and nature of assistance been considered?

### What competitive advantage do implementing partners have in providing assistance?

- What are the competences and capacity of partners including multilaterals, host governments and NGOs?
- Does the balance of funding through each main route reflect clearly articulated performance benefits?
- Does allocation of funding reflect past performance and assessed capacity to achieve the desired assistance goals?
- Has it been possible to use competitive processes, or benchmarking, or other analysis to give assurance about the cost-effectiveness of specific allocations and contracts?

### Does the proposed response minimise the negative effects of assistance, and integrate well with recovery and regeneration phases?

- Does the response reflect an appropriate balance between the costs and benefits of assistance targeting on those in most need?
- Do the instruments chosen minimise the negative effects on eg. local markets and future food production?
- Do the terms and timescales of assistance take account of the needs of implementing partners and of future recovery phases?

### Can DFID monitor the use of funds and follow-up performance achieved?

- Is the organisation committed to agreed quality standards?
- Is there adequate provision for performance monitoring?
- Is there suitable opportunity to vary funding/specification if circumstances or performance so dictate?

Source: National Audit Office

# Appendix 3

## Methodology

<p><b>Semi-structured interviews:</b></p>	<p>We met key staff within DFID to discuss the general approach in responding to humanitarian emergencies and the implementation of the humanitarian assistance policy and strategies.</p> <p>We also visited DFID's partners such as ECHO and United Kingdom based NGOs including the British Red Cross, Christian Aid, CARE, Médecins Sans Frontières, OXFAM, Save the Children, Tearfund and WorldVision, to discuss their views on DFID's performance in responding to humanitarian emergencies.</p>
<p><b>Country case studies:</b></p>	<p>We visited countries where DFID has recently provided humanitarian assistance, including Bangladesh, India, Sierra Leone, southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe) and Sudan, to understand the different contexts in which DFID responds to emergencies (see Appendix 4). Following the onset of the crisis in Iraq, we also conducted a limited review of DFID's preparation and early response. During each visit we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Undertook a mixture of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key DFID staff involved in responding to humanitarian emergencies. We also sought to evaluate DFID's response in a broader context by meeting representatives of the host nation government; bilateral donor partners; multilateral development and humanitarian assistance institutions; and NGOs.</li> <li>■ Examined documentation including country plans and strategies, humanitarian project and programme files and internal or independent reviews or evaluations related to DFID's overall response.</li> <li>■ Visited a number of humanitarian assistance projects in the field to gain a more detailed understanding of the nature of humanitarian activity; talk to field staff about their experience of working with DFID; and to recipients of humanitarian assistance about the impact of aid provided to them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reference panel:</b></p>	<p>We set up a reference panel to provide advice and guidance and to test and validate the emerging findings and draft report. Membership of the panel comprised the following experts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Jan Top Christensen</b>, Head of Department for Humanitarian Assistance, Danish International Development Agency.</li> <li>■ <b>Austen Davis</b>, General Director, Médecins Sans Frontières Holland.</li> <li>■ <b>Christian Frutiger</b>, Head of External Resources, International Committee of the Red Cross.</li> <li>■ <b>Joanna Macrae</b>, Coordinator, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute.</li> <li>■ <b>Christopher Needham</b>, Head of External Audit Sector, ECHO.</li> </ul> <p>We also commissioned the Overseas Development Institute to prepare a background paper in support of this report of DFID's response to emergencies in a broader context of the key issues and debates in the field.</p>

# Appendix 4

## Overview of the case studies we examined as part of this study

<b>Bangladesh</b>	<p>In September 2000, unprecedented flooding in the South West region of Bangladesh affected at least 2.7 million people. The area had not been flooded for over 50 years and communities were completely unprepared. Government figures showed that 36 people died, and that destruction and damage to houses, loss of personal possessions, crops and livestock and damage to local infrastructure was significant. The floods also had an impact on people's livelihoods and means and opportunity to work.</p> <p>DFID was one of the largest donors who responded with a package of relief and rehabilitation measures totalling £5.9 million which reached 710,000 people. The primary target group were the poorest and most vulnerable households within the affected population, with immediate relief activities and support of the recovery of livelihoods. Assistance included food aid, non-food aid (clothes, mats, blankets, etc), housing assistance, and cash for work. DFID Bangladesh was widely praised as being the quickest donor, both in terms of decision-making and in disbursement of funds.</p>
<b>India - Gujarat</b>	<p>A major earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale hit on Friday 26 January 2001. The epicentre was near the town of Bhuj in Gujarat State, affecting an area as large as Wales. It was also felt in Pakistan, Nepal and southern India. The earthquake was the largest in India since 1956. Over 18,000 people were killed and more than 160,000 injured. Over 500,000 people were made homeless and 95 per cent of the buildings in Bhuj were uninhabitable. Infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railways, communication systems and electricity lines were severely affected and an oil slick affected operations at Kandla port.</p> <p>DFID initially despatched a United Kingdom Search and Rescue Team of 69 personnel and set aside £10 million for relief assistance.</p>
<b>India - Orissa</b>	<p>In October 1999 a super cyclone hit the coast of the Indian state of Orissa. An estimated 10,000 people died and up to 10 million were affected, including 2 million made homeless. Livelihoods were shattered with 450,000 cattle estimated to have been killed, water and sanitation severely affected and the power distribution system damaged. The World Bank estimated the extent of the loss at some £700 million, which represented some 15-20 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product in 1999-2000.</p> <p>DFID and the Government of Orissa identified health needs as an immediate priority. The main components of aid provided included drug kits and supplies, maintenance of immunisation programmes in affected districts, epidemiological surveillance, school kits and infrastructure repair and crop irrigation system repairs.</p>
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	<p>A ten year civil war which officially ended in 2002, coupled with a history of corruption and mismanagement have led to Sierra Leone being classified as the least developed country in the world. It is estimated that some 200,000 people were killed in this complex emergency with associated considerable humanitarian needs. DFID, as the principal bilateral donor, provided over £100 million of assistance between 1999 and 2002 and has contributed to a range of initiatives in the humanitarian, governance and security sectors.</p>

<b>Sierra Leone cont...</b>	DFID has provided assistance to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme, as well as provision of technical support to the Sierra Leonean Government in developing its National Recovery Strategy. The recently signed framework agreement between the United Kingdom and Sierra Leone provides for a total DFID contribution of at least £120 million between 2002 and 2005, subject to progress against agreed benchmarks.
<b>Southern Africa</b>	<p>Six countries in southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland) have been suffering food shortages since early 2002. The international community has provided food aid and other assistance to over 14 million people.</p> <p>DFID has been the second largest bilateral contributor, providing over £106 million in response to the crisis since September 2001 (as well as over £21 million as the United Kingdom share of European Union assistance). United Kingdom resources have been channelled through United Nations agencies and a range of non-governmental organisations.</p>
<b>Sudan</b>	<p>The conflict in southern Sudan has been under way for over 40 years (with an 11-year break in the 1970s and early 1980s) creating widespread suffering and humanitarian need. In 1988, the United Nations negotiated improved humanitarian access, resulting in the establishment of Operation Lifeline Sudan, a framework for negotiating access on both sides of the conflict. In 1998, a famine developed as a result of fighting, drought and the restriction of access to humanitarian agencies. Fighting, food insecurity and malnutrition persist, although there is some optimism that a peace agreement will be signed later this year.</p> <p>The United Kingdom bilateral development programme to Sudan was suspended in January 1991, since then assistance has been limited almost entirely to humanitarian aid, with DFID providing over £37 million to interventions between 1996 and 2001. The United Kingdom Government has also been active in the peace process, an example of linking humanitarian response with political efforts to address the root causes of a crisis. A joint DFID/Foreign and Commonwealth Office 'Sudan Unit' was established in 2002 designed to take forward the United Kingdom strategy, a particularly relevant approach in situations where humanitarian activity has been accused of propping up war in the absence of sufficient political will to achieve a peaceful solution.</p>

# Appendix 5

## Costs and benefits of disaster mitigation measures

1. Investment of US\$3.15 billion in Chinese flood control over 40 years is believed to have averted potential losses of US\$12 billion. [Zheng Yuanchang 1996, 'China: Disaster Reduction and Social Sustainable Development'. *STOP Disasters* 29: 6-7]
2. Economic calculations around a range of flood-mitigation measures in the Red River delta of Viet Nam gave cost-benefit ratios between 2 and 60. A World Food Programme analysis of sea dykes valued the benefits of upgrading as twice the cost. [UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs 1994, *Strategy and Action Plan for Mitigating Water Disasters in Viet Nam* (Geneva: DHA) 90, 137]
3. A World Bank team working in La Paz, Bolivia, calculated that disaster prevention and preparedness would cost US\$2.50 per capita in total, whereas current annual losses from property damage alone to different natural disasters were estimated at US\$8 per capita. [Kreimer A, Preece M 1991 'Case Study: La Paz Municipal Development Project'. In Kreimer A, Munasinghe M eds, *Managing Natural Disasters and the Environment* (Washington: World Bank) 33]
4. In Viet Nam, 12,000 hectares of mangroves planted by the Red Cross protect 110 km of sea dykes. Planting and protection cost US\$1.1 million but has reduced the cost of dyke maintenance by US\$7.3 million per year (and the mangroves have protected 7,750 families living behind the dyke). [Kay R, Wilderspin I 2002, 'Mangrove planting saves lives and money in Viet Nam'. In *World Disasters Report 2002* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) 95]
5. According to OXFAM, the value of cattle saved on a raised earth flood shelter of approximately four acres in Bangladesh during the 1998 floods was as great as Tk 4,000,000 (£150,000) against a construction cost of only Tk 700,000 (£8,560). [Young R and Associates 2000, *DEC Bangladesh: 1998 Flood Appeal. An Independent Evaluation* (London: Disasters Emergency Committee) 20]

Source: supplied to NAO by Dr J Twigg, Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre, University College London