

3.4 Scope of the evaluation

The scope of the following evaluation, as a 'single agency response evaluation'⁴, is limited to the activities of Medair in Sri Lanka solely, and is not intended to be a representative evaluation of Medair's other programmes worldwide, or of other agencies working in Sri Lanka at the present time.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Qualitative and participatory approaches

The evaluation used several research techniques, including *participatory approaches* with an 'emphasis on sociological enquiry rather than economic measurement'.⁵ The rationale for this was to gather *qualitative* data for evaluating subjective components of the programme, such as impact on local communities, as well as enable the incorporation of beneficiaries' feedback.⁶⁻⁸ Participatory approaches are widely recognised as a key component in understanding impact, but have rarely been used in the humanitarian sector.⁹ Quantitative approaches would certainly have provided complementary data, but may not completely reflect the potentially wide breadth of impact of the programme.

4.2 Interview methods

Most of the data was collected through key-informant interviews and focus group interviews (see Table 2) using semi-structured questionnaires and interview topic guides (Appendix 1) that were devised and pre-tested prior to use.

Table 2. Summary of Interviews Conducted

Unit of study	Description	Number of interviewees
Focus Groups	1. Men's group 1	3
	2. Men's group 2	4
	3. Women's group	6
	4. Non-Tamil Muslim group	7
	5. Local Mosque Trustee Board	8
Key Informants Interviews	1. Medair Expatriate staff	8
	2. Medair Local Staff	3
	3. Other NGOs	3
	4. Local Government Officials	2
	5. Local Fishing Cooperatives	3
Opportunistic Unstructured Interviews	1. Non-beneficiaries	7
	2. Beneficiaries	5
	3. Other NGO	1

Key informant interviews^b were undertaken with;

- Medair expatriate and local staff,
- Key staff members of other NGOs, both local and international,
- Local authorities
- Local community and religious leaders.
- Representatives of 2 local fishing cooperatives

^b Informants have not been named for reasons of confidentiality and also at the request of participants. See Appendix 6 for itinerary of evaluation.

Focus group interviews were used in order to try and encourage more open and honest reporting by participants as well as to capture group dynamics.⁸ The participants were generally forthcoming and participated freely with informed consent obtained prior to interviews. This method of data collection was very popular and drew large audiences numbering between twenty to forty observers.

Several other *unstructured interviews* were also conducted opportunistically but provided little additional information not already obtained through the abovementioned two methods.

4.3 Sampling

The focus group interview participants were sampled purposively, with the expressed intention of trying to obtain as many different perspectives as possible, including beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, women, the elderly, and marginalised groups such as a Non-Tamil Muslim group. Similarly, key-informants who were likely to provide useful and appropriate information were identified and approached to participate.

4.4 Participant observation

The evaluator was also part of Medair's initial Emergency Team that conducted the initial needs assessments following the tsunami in December 2004. Whilst some observer bias may potentially occur, some insights relevant to the current evaluation were gleaned at that time, albeit unintentionally, through the process of participant observation.

4.5 Documentary and literature review

Background documentation was received from Medair's Emergency Desk Officer (EDO), which included Medair's Strategy Paper, Project Proposal, Interim Report, Sri Lanka Learning Review (Feb 2005), Lessons Learnt from Deployment to Sri Lanka (Dec 2004) and SitReps^c. Additional material from the published literature in medical journals and relevant websites (e.g. ALNAP, HPN) were also accessed. The documents were reviewed for any information of relevance to the evaluation.

4.6 Translation

Translation was provided by a local high-school English teacher. The translator is a Tamil Muslim who was not a resident of Addalaichchennai but from a neighbouring division. He had excellent communication skills and interacted well with participants.

4.7 Data analysis

A normative approach was used with an emphasis on the 'lessons to be learnt' perspective. The evaluation analysis was grounded in qualitative rather than quantitative data. Information gathered from participants of the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. Where some form of comparison was required, the initial 2 weeks following the tsunami were used as the baseline.

4.8 Reporting

Of particular note, the evaluation was scheduled for early June so that that any immediate learning could be fed back into the project cycle before the end of the programme at the end of July 2005. The initial findings were shared with the programme team during and at the end of the project visit, and the draft of this report was due for circulation to key stakeholders at the end of June for comments. The final report was submitted at the end of July. It is also important to note that the findings were only current up to June 9, 2005. Since then, any further developments will not have been captured by this report.

^c Situation reports