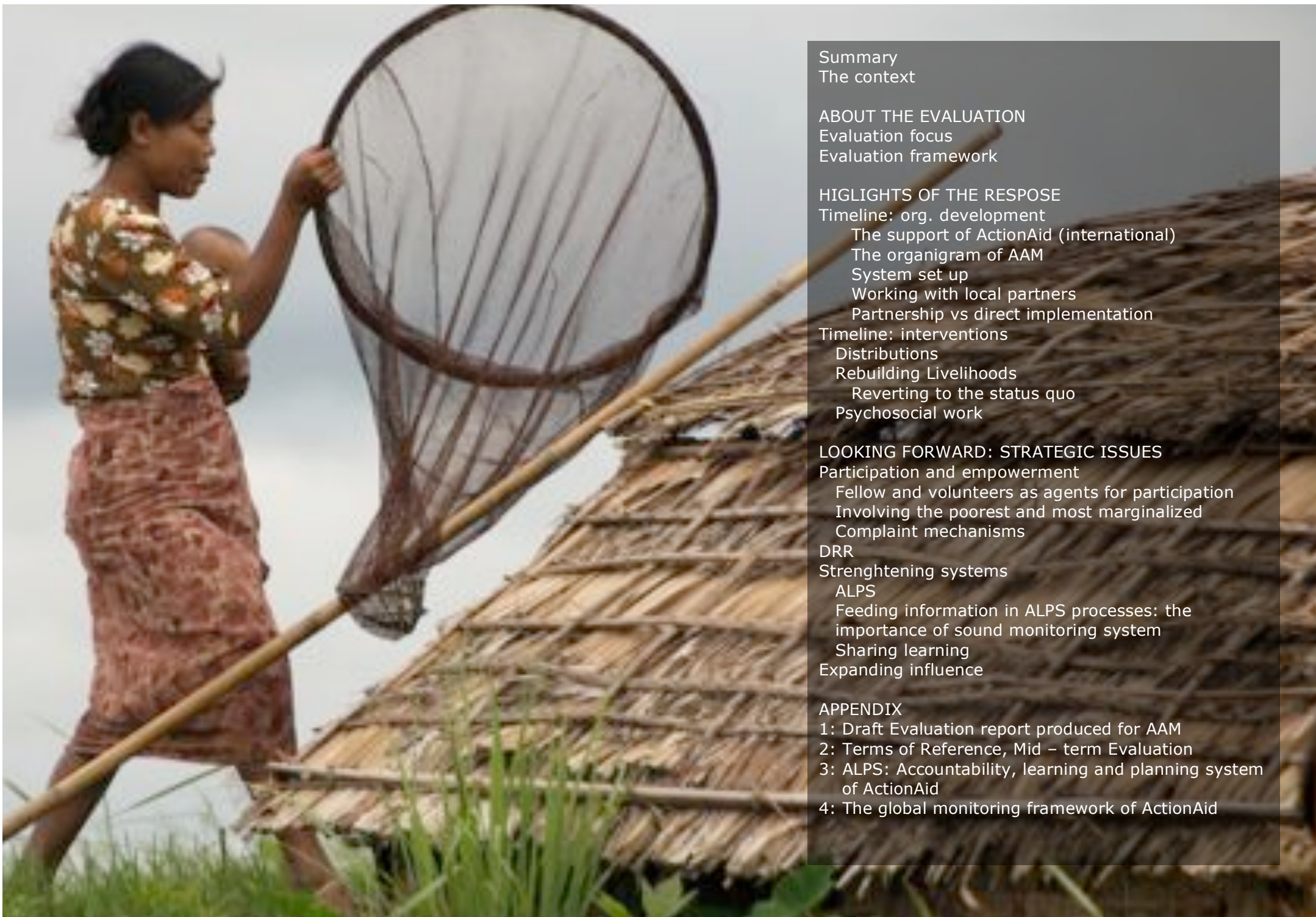


# Mid-term Evaluation Emergency Response Programme

for ActionAid Myanmar

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Summary  
The context

#### ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Evaluation focus  
Evaluation framework

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RESPOSE

Timeline: org. development  
The support of ActionAid (international)  
The organigram of AAM  
System set up  
Working with local partners  
Partnership vs direct implementation

Timeline: interventions  
Distributions  
Rebuilding Livelihoods  
Reverting to the status quo  
Psychosocial work

#### LOOKING FORWARD: STRATEGIC ISSUES

Participation and empowerment  
Fellow and volunteers as agents for participation  
Involving the poorest and most marginalized  
Complaint mechanisms

#### DRR

Strenghtening systems  
ALPS  
Feeding information in ALPS processes: the importance of sound monitoring system  
Sharing learning  
Expanding influence

#### APPENDIX

- 1: Draft Evaluation report produced for AAM
- 2: Terms of Reference, Mid - term Evaluation
- 3: ALPS: Accountability, learning and planning system of ActionAid
- 4: The global monitoring framework of ActionAid





Process diagram: how different groups in the community responded to the disaster designed by the villagers in They Ein Kyaung Su

## Summary

This report looks at the first phase of the emergency response to cyclone Nargis of ActionAid in Myanmar (AAM).

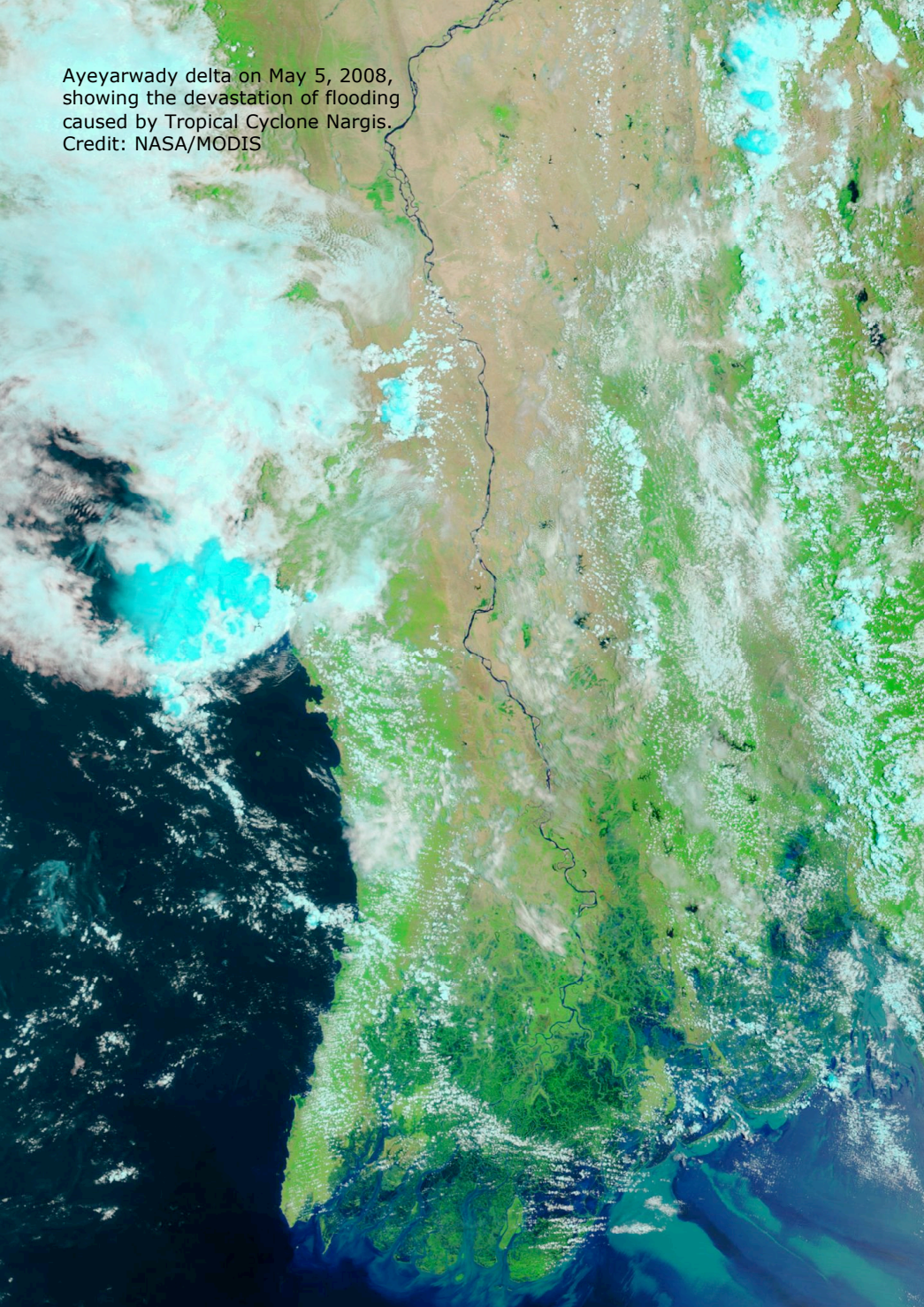
It starts by putting the evaluation in **context**. It highlights that there has been lot of emphasis, in the planning and monitoring of the overall humanitarian response, about the need for participation of communities in the process, and for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

The **evaluation framework** is then made explicit. The focus will be to check to what extent AAM managed to realize participation and DRR in its interventions through its approaches (participatory techniques, PVA, partnership, fellowships, psychosocial work). In addition, the evaluation will also check: 1) the capacity of the organizational systems to respond to the task, and 2) the extent to which the work reached out to various levels (i.e. not only the village one).

The **highlights of the intervention** look at two timelines. One follows the evolution of AAM, as - building on the international support provided by ActionAid - it became a 30 staff organization, employing young and committed local staff. Its engagement with partners is also considered, pointing out a few challenges around the provision of support to them, and around the need to redefine and deepen relationship with them at this point in time. The other timeline checks how interventions unfolded. It examines how AA adapted its response to the context, by moving out swiftly of food distribution and rather engaging in livelihood work. By building on participation of communities - enacted also through innovative practices such as the engagement of fellows - it managed to respond to the complexities of the local livelihoods. But the paradoxes of participation are also highlighted, pointing out how consultation might not necessarily lead to target primarily the most vulnerable and excluded. Consideration on how to further improve the capacity of AAM to serve the needs of the most marginalized and to improve its focus on women are made.

**Strategic issues** relating to empowerment of communities and disaster risk reduction are then examined. Overall ActionAid really put these engagements at the centre of its agenda. It modelled practices around that, which can prove influential also for other organizations. The challenge is now how to disseminate such practices in Myanmar and within ActionAid as a whole. AAM already started an interesting work of documentation around this. There is important learning to be taken by ActionAid as a whole. Strengthening organizational systems leading to stronger participatory planning and monitoring; focusing on accountability and learning as per ALPS; clarifying the theory of change behind interventions as per Global Monitoring framework... will help AAM in further strengthening its action. Another challenge for the months to come will be to further expand its influence, building on the networks and engagement that AAM had started to develop at the national level and in interagency forums.





Ayeyarwady delta on May 5, 2008, showing the devastation of flooding caused by Tropical Cyclone Nargis. Credit: NASA/MODIS

## The context

The cyclone Nargis - which hit the Ayeyarwady delta on the 2nd and 3rd of May 2008 - was a **disaster of unprecedented proportions in Myanmar**. "Communities and national staff were adamant that Myanmar had never faced a disaster of this scale in living memory" (Real Time Evaluation: 6). The strength, coupled with the unexpectedness of the event meant that Nargis became one of the deadliest storms ever recorded. According to the Post-Nargis Joint assessment, the official death toll was 84,537 with 53,836 still missing. 2.4 million people were severely affected of an estimated 7.35 million people living in the 37 affected Townships. Widespread destruction affected the livelihoods of the people living in the delta, the "rice bowl" of the country.

Compared with the recent history of sudden onset disasters in Asia, the Myanmar response to Nargis translated in a **more prominent role of the local actors**. For several weeks after Nargis stroke, Myanmar authorities refused access to new foreign agencies offering relief. The initial phase of the response was predominantly driven by national operators, who had little exposure to the modalities of disaster response practiced by international organizations. The Real Time Evaluation pointed out that, as a result of this, it was somehow difficult to measure and understand the response as per the conventional norms and modus operandi of the international humanitarian sector. But this does not mean that the national operators were not able to respond: the Myanmar people and the society demonstrated great resilience and capacity to react and recover from the disaster.

The national capacity to respond was nevertheless challenged by the sheer dimension of the disaster and by the resources required. The isolation of the country also meant that it was not possible to feed into the initial phase of the response expertise and lessons learnt from other large-scale disasters. By the end of May, following the visit of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, international relief organizations and international staff were allowed access Myanmar (even if some restrictions on travelling and visa still remained). A **Tripartite Core Group (TCG)**, comprising the Myanmar government, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the UN, was created. It provided a

mechanism for a rapid need assessment, and the framework for the international response. The documents produced by the Tripartite group advocated and put solidly on the agenda, from the start, some principles that will be looked at carefully by this evaluation. The Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA), for example, suggested as guiding principles for the response:

- **Effectiveness, Transparency and Accountability**, which included: “Commitment to coordinated and coherent approaches, through transparent information sharing to avoid overlap and fill gaps”; and “Establish common standards and approaches, with an independent complaint-handling mechanism to ensure accountability”
- **Independence, Self-Sufficiency and Capacity-Building**, which included: “Involve communities at all stages in the management of relief, including decision-making and feedback on quality of the relief and recovery efforts”; “Maximize use of local initiative, resources and capacities. Base planning and execution on local knowledge, skills, materials and methods, taking into account the need for affordable solutions”; “Build the capacity of local communities at every stage of the relief and recovery effort with a focus on reducing vulnerability to future disasters”; “Recognition of limited absorptive capacity in affected areas for large scale provision of aid. Ensure a progressive scaling up, as capacity of local communities increases.
- **Focus on the Most Vulnerable Groups**, which included: “Give priority to the most vulnerable groups, including female-headed households, children and orphans, and the poor, and take account of those with special needs”.
- **Strengthen communities**, which included: “*Build back better*, to reduce future disaster risks but avoid radical redesign and restructuring of settlements or patterns of land use”; and “Ensure that sensible and realistic measures are taken to protect the environment”

The strong prominence given from the start to modalities for response driven by community needs and priorities is a characterizing factor of the Nargis response. Accountability to beneficiaries had been put solidly on the agenda, to a larger extent than in previous emergencies, and INGOs also set their own

Accountability and Learning Working Group. Disaster Risk Reduction was also given prominence. To what extent this drive to quality, accountability and long-term vision had really influenced and shaped the overall response (or did relief remained “business as usual” instead?) is of course an open question. But the point to make is that the approaches promoted play to the strengths of ActionAid, whose strategy proclaims these very principles. To what extent these principles have been realized will be one driving question for this evaluation.

**COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS (from PONREPP)**

To identify lessons learned and incorporate the views of communities, a village-level consultation process was initiated as part of the PONREPP. Although simple and rapid, this consultation produced feedback around a number of common themes and issues which clearly indicate priorities. The key messages can be summarised as follows:

- Ensure that beneficiaries in the affected communities participate in conceiving, planning and implementing recovery programmes: support them in doing this.
- Begin by building trust: work transparently with everyone involved and ensure that any village-based groups supported by NGOs and the UN are themselves trusted, transparent and equitable.
- Listen to the views of communities: make a greater effort to give affected communities a real opportunity to develop and oversee their own recovery plans.
- Avoid the formation of new groups and committees to undertake projects unless absolutely necessary: instead seek to support existing community groups that have already demonstrated their commitment and have credibility in the community.
- Focus efforts on (i) recovering sources of income, (ii) rehabilitating intra-community • infrastructure and inter-community trade, service and social links, (iii) re-establishing service delivery (health, education, microfinance) to communities, and (iv) regenerating communities’ natural resource base.
- Build back better to reduce community vulnerability to future disasters.





## About the evaluation

ActionAid staff participating the evaluation start the process of drawing a timeline of response with a CBO leader in Oo Moe Thee village.

This evaluation is a 10 days engagement in the period 16th of June 2009 to the 10th July 2009. It included a stay at the Yangon Office of ActionAid -where I could meet with AAM staff and some of their partners - and a 4 days field trip in the Delta.

I had the privilege of visiting several villages (Oo Moe Thee, Thae Enit Chaung Su, Kan Sate, Kyaung Su, Ta Nat Pin Sate, Ma Ngae Gye and Ta Nyi) in the Pyapon area and to meet ActionAid Program support staff. Unfortunately I could not meet field staff from partner organizations. Staff from ActionAid International was also consulted via email / Skype.

What ActionAid achieved in little more than one year since Nargis hit is really commendable: it responded on a large scale, putting in place innovative and participatory modalities for action, and it has been true to its commitment in working side by side with the people affected by the cyclone, recognizing them as active actors rather than powerless victims. There is a lot to learn from the programme, and from the enthusiasm and critical attitudes of all these involved in it. I hope that this evaluation can help ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) and ActionAid as a whole (AA) to take stock from the experience so far and to further advance their modalities or response.

## Evaluation focus

The purpose of this evaluation is to look at the first nine months of the response to Nargis.

A mid term evaluation for the programme was commissioned by ActionAid Myanmar in March 2009. A draft report was produced, providing information and insights on individual activities, but it was never finalised.

To avoid duplication of work (and "evaluation fatigue" for these consulted!) it was decided that this evaluation would build on the work already done rather than to start from scratch. To better complement the existing information, the second stage of the evaluation would have a more strategic outlook on the overall approach of ActionAid Myanmar.

The draft report of the previous evaluation is attached in Appendix 1. It should be read in conjunction with this evaluation, to gain an understanding of the achievements and challenges for AAM, especially as far as specific sectors of intervention are concerned.

The delays in the evaluation process mean that this exercise happens at a later date than originally planned (end of June 2009 rather than in March). So, in addition to looking at achievements of the first nine months of the programme, I could also witness further progress made in areas that are now taking strong prominence in the programme (e.g. disaster risk reduction). However, on the negative side, it was now quite hard to investigate in due detail what had happened in the initial phases of the response. It is worth also pointing out that most villages received aid from many different agencies, so it can be challenging to disentangle the work done by an individual organization from the memories of the overall response.

Giving the character of the review (a mid-term evaluation) the evaluation attempted to:

- **Pause and reflect:** the evaluation is seen as an opportunity for staff to take stock from the work so far and to encourage a process of critical reflection. I strongly believe that the best recommendations are these found in dialogue with staff. Rather



than emphasizing the “judgemental aspects”, I tried to use my engagement with staff and communities as a stimulus for reflection and mutual learning.

- **Look forward:** focus on what was learnt in the past months, by doing, and looking at “mistakes” as opportunities for learning. Discuss how the acquired knowledge should influence the future of the programme.
- **Focus on learning:** I felt that a lot was experienced and learnt by ActionAid Myanmar in the first months of the response, as the organization tried and tested innovative approaches in their work. In this evaluation I will try to point out what areas might offer some crucial learning for ActionAid as a whole but also, more broadly, for the Humanitarian sector. Looking in depth at these areas was not possible in the limited time available in this evaluation, but it recommended that ActionAid consider looking closely at some of them in the months to come.
- **Unpack the emerging strategy:** ActionAid Myanmar had evidently a strategic approach and a clear direction in its work. However, its strategy is not an explicit one that can be found, for example in a shared strategy document. I felt that this mid-term evaluation could be an important opportunity for staff in starting to start the process of making their strategy of response explicit, also considering the fact that the AAM will soon embark in a country assessment to define its future overall strategy. I designed this evaluation report with this in mind, trying to highlight key areas of work and looking at their linkages with the overall strategic approach of ActionAid international and of its Human Security Theme. The feedback session to the staff was designed with this concern in mind.

## Evaluation framework

The starting point if this evaluation was to recognize – when talking with the staff involved in shaping the response - that the work of ActionAid after Nargis was driven by two main concerns. I found valuable to use these areas of engagement as a starting point because they also can be seen as characterizing niches for ActionAid:

- **Participation and empowerment:** ensuring that the response to disaster looked at the people affected as active actors, and ensured their full participation – and in particular the participation of *women* as well as of the *most vulnerable groups* – in defining and driving the modalities of response. AAM seemed to have seen the response to Nargis as an opportunity for empowerment, and struggled to avoid creation of dependency. *Accountability* to beneficiaries was an integral feature of this area of concern.
- **Disaster risk reduction:** ensuring that the emergency response also takes into due consideration the need to reduce future vulnerability to disaster.



*Evaluation Framework: linking key concerns, approaches and activities*

These concerns have been translated in practice by using a variety of *approaches*, which included:

- **Participatory methodologies:** which ranged from consultation and meetings with communities and their leaders to in depth process making use of PRA/PLA techniques
- **PVA.** The participatory Vulnerability Analysis is a participatory approach developed by ActionAid, which looks at root causes of vulnerabilities and - through multilevel, multi-stakeholder

engagements - generates plans to address them. The understanding and action of communities exposed to disaster is at the centre of the process.

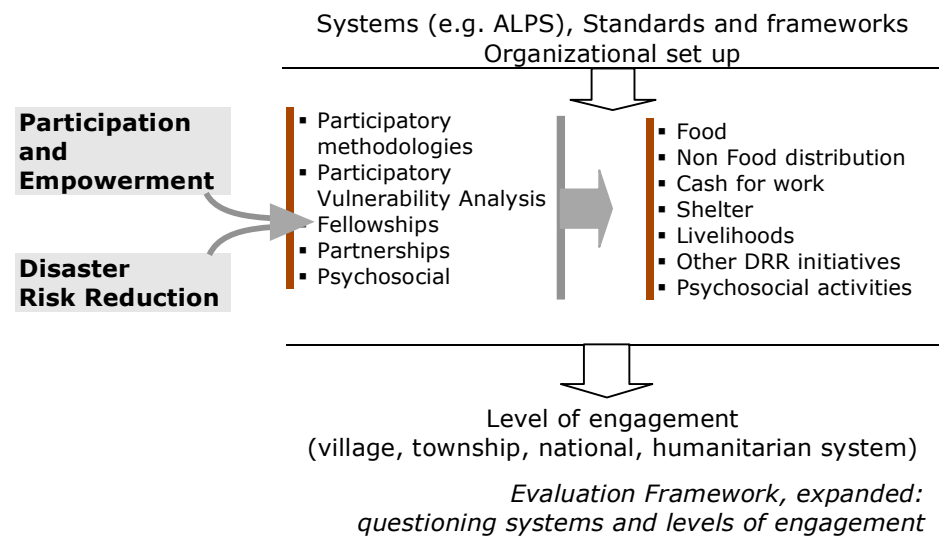
- **Fellows and volunteers:** since 2006 AAM invested in a fellowship programme for training young people with leadership potential in sustainable development, voluntary action and community mobilization. Training and reflection time was coupled with long-term placement in villages. Some fellows worked in affected villages in the initial phase of the response. The fellowship programme was also expanded in parallel with the emergency work, and some fellows engaged in long term DRR work. Recently AAM also started to train volunteers, who receive less in depth training than fellows and are deployed to support their own villages.
- **Partnership:** most interventions of AAM were implemented by local Partner organizations.
- **Psychosocial work:** AAM engaged with "beneficiaries" with the belief that they are active actors, and that relief should be aimed at helping them to overcome trauma and rebuild their confidence and capacity to act.

These approaches, when applied to the activities implemented, should characterize and transform them. Using participation and DRR as the starting points, and enacting them through the above approaches should result in a response that stands apart from the top-down, short-term modalities of response still often in use by the humanitarian sector. The framework for the evaluation also recognizes that examining the activities done by AAM as relatively disconnected pieces - described with the conventional humanitarian jargon - would not give justice to the programme.

The question therefore is: to what extent AAM has been true to its desire not only to save lives and rebuild livelihoods, but to empower people in the process and to put the most poor and marginalized at the centre of the process? To what extent the approaches adopted really shaped up the interventions in the field? To what extent food and non-food distribution, cash for work, shelter and livelihoods programmes, etc. had been really underpinned and innovated by these approaches? I could get some indication about this in my evaluation, even if deeper

understanding of the dynamics in place would have required more time in the field.

Expanding on the framework, the evaluation also questioned: to what extent the standards and framework in use, and the organizational set up had accompanied or hindered the process? To what extent AAM reached different levels and stakeholders, creating change not only at the village level, but targeting the district / national one as well as the humanitarian system architecture?



**The fellowship programme of AAM**  
 ActionAid with two partners began the first "Fellowship Program" in 2006 which aimed to develop 30 young leaders from different ethnic groups and build their capacity to facilitate participatory processes and socio-economic development in their communities. The program utilises a community participation tool known as Reflect which promotes the creation of a critical learning environment among the people. The program started in Kachin state and extended to Kayah state and later to Rakhine state and Ayeyarwady Division. As of June 2009 there are 143 fellows working in communities in Kachin, Kayah, Rakhine States and in Ayeyarwady Division.





## Highlights of the response

A lady who received roofing material from PACT/ActionAid in the They Ein Kyaung Su village.

When Nargis struck ActionAid had already a presence – however limited – in country. The organization was not yet fully registered, but had established a good network of contacts in Myanmar and initiated some capacity building work through its fellowship programme. The practice and knowledge of some distinctive ActionAid approaches, such as “reflect”, were promoted amongst partners and fellows.

Having a presence in country put the organization at an advantage. As other agencies were still struggling to enter the country, ActionAid could immediately start operating on the ground, making use of the connections and linkages it had established. ActionAid joined forces with the Myanmar individuals, groups and communities that had already started responding. Further challenges to the response were posed by the restrictions on local NGOs and individuals when seeking to deliver aid or access the Delta by the Government. It was key to operate as an organization that were deeply rooted in the Delta and had an established presence in the area.

The challenge for ActionAid Myanmar in engaging with the response was essentially threefold:

- **Scaling up:** when Nargis hit, ActionAid was a small low budget programme, run by an expatriate staff plus a support intern. Within ActionAid, Myanmar was not recognized as a full-fledged country programme. One year after Nargis AAM is a relatively large emergency response, with a budget of nearly 2 millions pounds and an office of 30+ staff, national and international.
- **Start operations in a new geographical area:** before Nargis hit, the Delta was a comparatively richer area of Myanmar. ActionAid - who had until then concentrated its activities in more marginalized areas – did not have a presence there.
- **Move from developmental work to emergency response:** the main area of work of ActionAid before Nargis was essentially a long-term capacity building programme aiming to train “fellows” and therefore create local leadership capacity. The work on disaster and DRR had been very limited (AAM, for example, had not developed a contingency plan, but had a need assessment format for response to floods). The AAM

country director, however, had previous experience of disaster response.

Considering all the above, it was a bold decision to move ahead full speed with the response, and there were legitimate concerns on the capacity of the programme to scale up amidst crisis. What gave the confidence to go ahead was

- Availability of (relatively flexible) **funding** such as that from DEC, which comes with relatively little strings attached and allows to set programmes that are promptly adapted to the emerging conditions in the field; and availability of international capacity - brought in country - to apply for and manage other sources of funding.
- Availability of trained “**fellows**” which worked as volunteers in the initial phases of the response. A fellow is basically a young leader capable also to generate, “action without aid”. S/he is skilled in pushing communities to mobilize their own resources and skills.
- **Partnership with NGOs active in micro-credit**, who could provide to ActionAid the structure needed to rapidly and efficiently disburse cash to beneficiaries.
- **Linkages with large private sector business groups** which were very active in the initial phase of the response and which had provided logistical support to the response. ActionAid could complement their logistic capacity with its capacity to mobilize.
- Capacity to rapidly **create linkages with institutions rooted in the villages** (e.g. churches).
- Capacity of ActionAid international to rapidly **mobilize international staff:** to provide support through its International Emergency and Conflict Team (IECT) as well to rapidly recruit into the Myanmar office staff with experience of emergency response in ActionAid.

In the following I will discuss key aspects of the evolution of the programme of ActionAid. As the response went hand in hand with the development of the AAM country structure, I will look at two timelines: one mapping programme components, the other the organizational development. More detail on specific programme aspects can be found in Appendix 1.



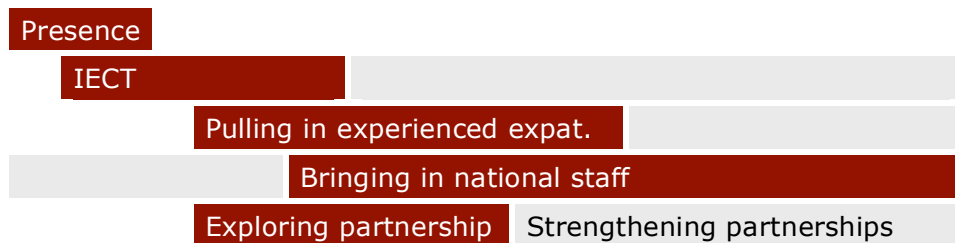
The reason for using timelines as a way of analysis is that looking specific areas of work in isolation does not really make justice to the work of AAM. The organization tried to have a holistic and strategic approach and effectively stage and link different components so that they could “flow” one into another and complement each other.

When describing the programmatic approach I referred to some studies and assessment such as the *Social Monitoring Report* or the *Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan* by the Tripartite Core Group, November 2008 and the *Real Time Evaluation* of the response, to give a sense of where AAM response sits in comparison with the broader achievements of the sector.



Villagers in Kyaung Su walk on a newly built road planned with a DRR pilot project. AAM only provided materials, the village contributed labour and designed the road.

## Timeline: org. development



When Nargis stroke, AAM had a very limited presence in Myanmar, in the form of a programme. The organization was not yet registered. Today AAM has 32 staff (approx 1/6 international) and it is completing the registration process.

### The support of ActionAid (international)

The support of the ActionAid was key in helping AAM to respond. The International Emergency and Conflict Team (IECT) deployed immediately an advisor, who managed to enter the country before visa started to be delayed by the government. He could support the country manager in organizing the response and in rapidly find funding for it. Support was most intense in the initial phase of the response, but the engagement continued for the months to come.

Myanmar was declared on "Red Alert" by the ActionAid CEO, meaning that support to the country should be a priority in the Asia region and beyond. The Asia region in particular started to provide support in key areas such as finance (the most pressing problem being the lack of a bank transfer system) and communication. Management of neighbouring countries (e.g. Cambodia) provided immediate support. Other colleagues with expertise on DEC funding also shared their experiences and learning, and offered insights and support in managing and

reporting on it. All this support was invaluable for the Myanmar programme, and was instrumental in shaping up the response. At times there have been some gaps integrating external support into internal communication loops. When proposal development happened somehow in isolation from the internal teams that had then to manage them, the potential for some confusion arose.

Some staff with strong international experience in responding to disaster was then brought in country, strengthening practices. The staff brought in also helped to shape crucial systems such as finance. It has been noticed that the quality of the financial analysis and budgeting put in place by of the finance manager reinforces the value of a sufficiently experienced finance person being part of them team from the outset of a programme. It was pointed out that ActionAid should strive to ensure that this capacity is in place even earlier, in future emergencies. International capacity was also brought in to support strategic areas of work such as Disaster Risk Reduction. The impact of this is quite visible in the innovative practices put in place, which helped AAM to become a leading organization in the sector in Myanmar. A partner was very appreciative of the added value of international staff, pointing out that - contrary to what he saw happening in other international organizations he cooperated with, where young and inexperienced staff was sometimes deployed - AAM could justify the presence of international staff because of their experience.

The question is now how to ensure that capacity is transferred built amongst the national staff so that they can take over. The issue is even more crucial in consideration of the fact that there is no guarantee that foreigners will continue to be granted long-term visa. Some contingency planning should be done on how to transfer capacity or how to ensure remote support to operations.

### Issues for consideration

For ActionAid (international)

- The **Red Alert system** seem to have really worked in ensuring priority support for the emergency response and in creating



conditions for shared learning on operational aspects. It should be used again in future emergencies.

- IECT team and, in general, ActionAid, **demonstrated strong capacity to promptly mobilize** to provide support to Myanmar, and to bring in people that have been instrumental in shaping and accompanying the response. The capacity to bring in staff with high competencies in strategic areas of work (e.g. DRR, psychosocial) was very important to enhance quality of response.
- It is important to **strengthen communication lines** amongst staff providing external support and the local team, to share more effectively understanding and assumptions about the programme.

For AAM

- Given the looming risk of limitations in the **access of foreign staff**, AAM should give priority to capacity building plans in the sectors now covered by expatriates. It should also plan how to ensure remote management / support if need arise.

## The organigram of AAM

As the programme expanded, AAM also increased its own local staff, which, at the beginning of the emergency had consisted in only one intern. In the aftermath of the cyclone the nature of the work meant that AAM had a relatively loose structure, where everyone was doing everything regardless of job titles. It was noticed that also when the organigram was developed, it took sometime for the staff to internalize it, and still now there are some areas that might required further clarification of roles and complementarities (e.g. the areas of IASL and of documentation and research)

AAM had clearly invested in people: a very empowering and inspirational leadership helped to create a dynamic environment for enthusiastic and committed young staff. The energy in the office and in the programmes is palpable, as it is their ownership of the programme. All staff were lead to work in an inquisitive and active way: they seek to gain a strong understanding of the dynamics at work, and a culture of innovation is promoted. The organization is quite a flat one, and it encourages exchange and dialogue amongst all staff, and learning by doing. In Myanmar,

AAM had preferred to recruit young staff with “the right attitude” rather than tapping in existing expertise. Some mistakes had originating by their inexperience, but a supportive climate meant that they were not discouraged in trying to do better. Some staff had also been exposed to international meetings and trainings in the past year, and they seem to have taken on board the knowledge acquired, and adapted it to the local context. AAM local staff had also established connections locally, and given considerable input in interagency meetings and forums. This is quite an achievement as some of these forums (e.g. the accountability and learning working group) had tended so far to be dominated by internationals. AAM did stand out for giving visibility to the innovation and learning with the voice of its local staff.

There is however a risk in that much knowledge is held by staff and have not yet been externalized or made explicit. AAM had invested recently in creating good briefings and documentation to capture its approaches, but the details of the practices, and the contextual learning would be at risk if staff leaves. There is also the challenge of how to pass this knowledge to outsiders: like-minded organizations and partners, for example. The question is now how to share and capture this knowledge in a way that is flexible and adaptable. Conventional ways of documenting the approaches (e.g. reporting only) might not suffice. The innovative nature of the learning happened so far demands innovative approaches and sound practices of shared learning. It requires integrating various forms of documentation (conventional reporting but also multimedia) with reflective practice initiatives and forums for exchange (learning meetings, mentoring and accompaniment). Specific attention should go on how to transmit the tacit knowledge acquired with Nargis experience, i.e. that knowledge that cannot really be ever made fully explicit, and that cannot be exchanged in any other way than through shared practice.

## Issues for consideration

For AAM

- AAM should continue to **invest in people**, and in enacting positive, value driven leadership. The outcome of the work done

so war is outstanding: enthusiastic, empowered staff, and a very positive and innovative working climate.

- The **interfaces** of some areas of work (e.g. documentation / IASL) need to be further developed and clarified to full respond to the need of the organization.
- How to create **shared learning** opportunities so that the strategies and modalities of work are made explicit, and practices captured? And how to share the more elusive tacit knowledge? It could now be an appropriate time for AAM to define its shared learning strategy. AAM should also consider how to involve partners and likeminded organizations in the process.
- AAM staff had demonstrated to be receptive to trainings / coaching and keen to adapt the learning to their job. HR - in conjunction with Programmes - might consider working on a **capacity assessment** and a capacity development plan.
- A strength (but also a challenge!) in the current setup is that AAM project itself as a **young and innovative organization**. It will be important to check how this influence the perception and the buy in of its work and practices by more conservative organizations / establishments, especially in a context where age and seniority do matter.

## Setting up systems

It has been already mentioned how the finance system had benefited by the deployment of an experienced finance manager. This was a strategic area to tackle as AAM had a fair number of projects and funding streams to manage.

In setting organizational systems, one area that might have benefited from more external input in the early stages was **Impact Assessment / Shared Learning (IASL)**. This would have helped to build up more awareness of the system in use by ActionAid and also to support better modelling of monitoring systems. The leadership of ActionAid was in tune with ALPS principles and practices. They were also ready to renegotiate plans and proposals with donors based on community consultation. This deflected the risk of moving towards donor driven response, or to adopt acritically the "logframe" as the preferred way to describe change. Luckily the understanding of change in AAM remained a

rich one, not constrained by narrow understanding of donor requirements. But it is worth pointing out that – being the national staff tasked with impact assessment relatively young and little experienced in the role - a reductionist and simplistic approach to planning and to understanding change was a very real risk. AA should be aware of it when supporting future response. Stronger investment in IASL might also have helped to shape from the start better **monitoring systems** in support to ALPS, and to adapt them to the evolution of the programme.

AAM also recruited staff with a role encompassing **communication / reporting / documentation**. Operational staff positively saw this position, because it allowed them to reduce their reporting duties and enabled them to focus on the work in the field. The documentation officer was willing and keen to maintain close contact with field teams in ways that were not felt a burden by them: data were gathered and collected in agile ways (e.g. the flipcharts in field offices were photographed by the communication person), and this simple way of keeping information under control was well received by staff.

## *Issues for consideration*

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For ActionAid (international)

- Given the small dimension of the pre-existing programme in Myanmar, the capacity of deploying a **finance** person with experience of ActionAid and emergency work was a strong asset for Myanmar. Ideally such position should have been created even before, at the very start of the emergency, and this might have helped in creating stronger basis for the financial work of partners.
- An area where ActionAid could have invested more in creating capacity in the earliest stages (and in supporting the existing role in AAM) is **Impact Assessment / Shared Learning**. AAM received some support from the IASL advisor in Asia. Further support would have helped in making more explicit that some of the principles adopted when working with communities were in fact the principles espoused by ActionAid. It might have created more awareness of ALPS – and on how it is adapted to an emergency context - from the start. It could have helped in structuring stronger processes around it, within AAM and possibly involving partners and donors.

## For AAM

- The model chosen for **documenting** the programme (a staff member tasked with it) seems to have worked well in reliving staff from paperwork and helping them to focus on the job. There is of course a risk in disconnecting reporting from implementation, in that monitoring / documentation might be seen as "someone else's job" rather than an area where also implementing staff need to focus to understand change. There is also a risk in creating a documentation and communication post in that it can end up adding to the workload of staff by putting demands on them. In the case of Myanmar it seems that the attitude of the documenting person who shaped the role added value to this post. He had established strong working relationship with people in the field, and he had made good use of the "rough" monitoring systems used in the field – e.g. the spreadsheet on the wall – without imposing top down requests. This approach needs to be valued and continued.

## Working with local partners

When Nargis stroke, AAM did not have partners in the Delta region. It had to forge new relationships at a time when the few local NGOs were also in high demand and courted by the international organizations that newly entered the country; or by the organizations which already had a presence, but that, as AAM did, were opening new areas of operation in the Delta. Some of these local organizations had neither direct working experience in the Delta themselves, nor of emergency response work. They were undergoing big transformation in scale and scope. Their systems were weak and not always conformed to the scale of the emergency. It is therefore no surprise that the work with partners had been a mixed bag, and that it had sometime lacked depth of engagement. There were also limitations to the extent in which AAM could influence its partners at a time when they had to juggle the various requirements and demands of the organizations that started to fund them... on top of responding to the most acute emergency that had hit the country in recent times.

AAM had engagement and sharing meetings with partners in Yangon, but in the field relationships have been sometime problematic, with partner staff sometimes resisting the

support/monitoring of AAM. This, of course, has been a challenge in strengthening systems at the root. Some partners were also less in tune with the way of working of ActionAid, and demand for consultation might not have come easy at the beginning of the response: so different partners managed to involved people in different ways. In these cases where consultation was less, ActionAid also had the least exciting results. It was also reported that some deviations in project implementation occurred sometimes due to cultural perspectives where older partner staff did not acknowledge the input of the young AAM staff.

Project orientation and MOU might have probably been more thorough, and some partners pointed out that, for example, better induction on financial matters and accompaniment on this might have helped improving the quality of work. In some case donor requirements were not fully clear to partners and, as a result, some resources had been allocated in ways that were not conform to the approved programmes, something that had been then to be readdressed by AAM.

AAM also could have probably invested more in providing induction to its own systems. Partners did not know about ALPS, for example. But neither did much staff in ActionAid: even if they were already practicing its principles, they had not been exposed to its structure.

How to build partnership at the beginning of an emergency is of course a big challenge. Especially so in a context of high demand for partners, low existing capacity to operate to international standards and procedures, limitations of movement and travelling for expatriate personnel (which was an issue at the inception of the emergency and it is possibly still is a risk factor). And challenges were further increased by the fact that relationships are not one-to-one, but partners need to respond to many organizations, with different approaches and procedures.

I guess it is part of the game to accept that - at the beginning of an emergency - there is no silver bullet in getting the right partners and the right engagement. What matters is that some key principles are set right from the start and demanded to partners, and all in all AAM seemed to have ensured that staff espoused its consultative and participative approaches.



What an organization can do is to stick to some minimum standards for work and then use the engagement as a way to explore commonalities and space for further work together. And an organization, as AAM did, should also give itself the space to give a chance to varied partnerships, bringing in diverse skills. For example, the partnership of AAM with a micro-credit organization helped AAM to engage in cash distribution in the early stages of the programme to an extent that would not have been otherwise possible, but in the long term there was simply not enough coherence of practice to make this partnership a viable one in the long term.

AAM is now in the process of revising its partnerships. It will drop some and forge stronger linkages with others. The organization is now at a critical juncture where a clear assessment of capacity of partners is needed, and a clear roadmap for mutual engagement needs to be defined. The time is ripe to also look at partnership issues not only from the operational angle, but looking at the values on which the partnership is based. There is more space to work on mutual accountabilities and power sharing, and AAM is starting to create conditions for this by involving its partners in the design of its programmes, rather than by bringing them in only as implementers.

A capacity development strategy / accompaniment process needs to be agreed and designed, and this should involve deepening the understanding of ActionAid approaches, values and principles (ALPS in particular, as the underpinning system and philosophy of work, see appendix 3) as a way to increase accountability, create critical reflection, and share understanding of change. It is important that AAM clarifies its own theory of change so that it can be effectively shared with partners (adapted/contextualized versions of ActionAid global monitoring framework could be a useful tool for this, see appendix 4). This process of mutual clarification of how change happens will be useful also because some partners have history and background of social entrepreneurship working in close connection with private sector, which is somehow different from the stereotypical AA partner. It is important that capacity building of local organizations is done in true dialogue, acknowledging the existing experience and capacity

of organizations in Myanmar, and renegotiating processes and values held by ActionAid so that they can be fully contextualized.

### ***Issues for consideration***

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#### For ActionAid (international)

- AA should adapt its **partnership guidelines** and materials so that they could be readily used in an emergency context. It should seek ways to actively support country programmes in expanding their partnership when emergencies hit in areas where AA has no existing connection.

#### For AAM

- **MOU** with partners should be sharpened and include clearer mention of standards and frameworks in use by ActionAid (including system wide standards such as code of conduct, sphere, etc). More in depth guidance on financial systems and funding procedures should also be ensured.
- AAM should **strengthen its own systems** and knowledge around them to be in a better position to promote them with partners and to support partners in using them. Effective sharing will involve AAM and partners staff in various roles. It is important to clarify responsibilities and linkages on this, and to clear up communication lines. **MOUs** should be enhanced accordingly.
- AAM should create **stronger linkages** amongst staff operating at field level in ActionAid and in partner organizations, with the purpose of advancing monitoring but, above all, advance learning
- AAM should continue to engage with partners not only at the operational level, but involving them in the definition of the strategy of intervention, as a way to **share power and knowledge**.
- AAM should make explicit its of **theory of change**, its values, its approach and engage with partners around them. This would involve looking more closely at organizational systems and frameworks (e.g. ALPS, Global Monitoring Frameworks) and seeking how they adapt to the Myanmar context.

### Partnership vs. direct implementation

ActionAid in Myanmar had sometimes worked by directly implementing projects, especially when the local capacity / buy in for different and innovative ways of working was limited. This is the case, for example, of the recent pilot project for DRR, but also of some psychosocial work. Probably the most interesting work done by AAM was implemented directly, or saw intensive involvement of its staff in the process.

Should AAM continue to implement directly some projects? There should be a recognition that AAM needs to create spaces for testing innovative approaches, which are not the usual stuff of emergencies. There might be – understandably - resistances by partners, and challenges in adopting ways of working that do not coincide with their usual modus operandi. And, in addition, understanding and interiorizing such approaches – especially when they are not yet tested and proven – might be a challenge for partners (especially at a time when they are also busy with in other partnership which might lead them to use more conventional approaches). Hence the need for AAM to model: to try and test new approaches first, provide evidence of success, and develop guidance in the process.

This brings in the question if AAM (and possibly ActionAid as a whole) should endorse more consciously in this dual track approach in its work: testing and modelling approaches directly (or working very closely with partner staff, as a joint team rather than as separate organizations held together by implementing agreements). And then – after gaining evidence of their value, and after trying and testing practical ways of working - coaching and accompanying partners in working along the same lines.

Streamlining innovative approaches in partners work would also be a response to the need that ActionAid has to scale up models once they are tested, and generating buy in for them. What is the best way to diffuse innovative ways of working? Partnership with local actors is of course a possibility, to be seen in connection with other strategies (dissemination in working groups...)

This dual track work might involve strategic changes in the way response is deployed, which would need to be assessed case by

case. In a situation where AA is not the only organization providing response, one option might be privileging an investment in testing and modelling approaches in the gaps left by other agencies rather than going for broad coverage. Partnership should then be consciously based on learning, coaching, replication of models rather than engaging with partners, from the start, in more conventional programmes.

### *Issues for consideration*

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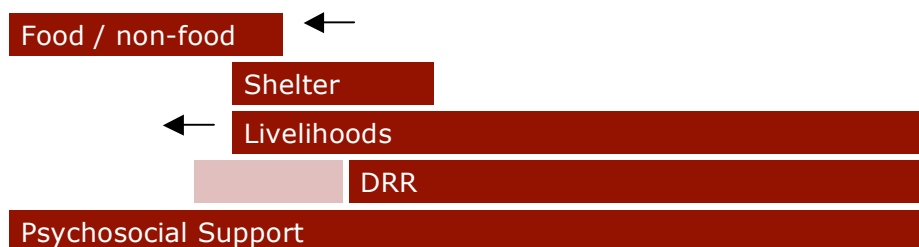
For ActionAid (international) / AAM

- AAM - and ActionAid as a whole - might think of what would be the best way to realise a dual track process of **testing models** and then bringing partners and like minded organization aside.

For AAM

- AAM should **examine its current partnerships** to identify which are the most receptive partners to take on the innovation tested by AAM, and consider what would be the best modalities of accompaniment.
- AAM started to develop **support materials** as it was trying and testing new approaches (e.g. a training manual on psychosocial work). AAM should continue to seek agile ways to produce guidance on practices as they are tested.

## Timeline: interventions



### Distributions

*"Aid providers considered needs and priorities as identified by the village committees or individual villagers only rarely. The social impacts team heard of very few cases where participatory needs assessments had been carried out before aid was distributed, and even fewer where communities could decide to spend assistance on what they wanted" From: Social monitoring report*

AAM Myanmar started responding by providing food and non-food items and psychosocial support thanks to its network of volunteers. They were able to quickly deploy in villages as well as in relief camps set after Nargis.

At the beginning relief items were provided to all, but staff pointed out that - as knowledge of the context grew - it was possible to target more efficiently these in most need. It is now difficult to verify how distributions - in particular of **food items** - were targeted and how they fit in the overall aid given to a village. When discussing the timeline of relief in this village a CBO leader recalled that ActionAid and other large organizations made use of beneficiary lists but many smaller organization and individuals did not. Overall, many parallel distributions of food and other items went on, and they were in practice coordinated by local leaders.

In addition to food, AAM also started to distribute **non-food items**, negotiating with communities what should be given. Staff mentioned that the communities asked for locally relevant items (such as hot water flasks to keep tea and umbrella) that would not have been included had the packages been designed in Yangon.

Staff, however, also added items not requested by beneficiaries, such as portable radio, as a disaster risk reduction tool.

As indicated by the arrow in the timeline, AAM compressed and reduced its work on food distribution, in recognition of the fact that 1) other agencies such as WFP were engaging in the activity and 2) the pressing issue for people was to rebuild their livelihoods to stop, as soon as possible, dependency from food aid. Local markets were starting again to function, and it was felt that cash injections should be preferred to boost local economy.

AAM then focused its work on distribution on shelter and livelihood items. The degree of success of such initiatives appears to be related to the degree of consultation that accompanied them (which in turn also depended somehow from the attitudes and capacities of partners).

The **shelter** programme was mainly realized by distributing iron sheets, plastic tarpaulins and building materials. There are questions around it. Such items seemed a viable idea at a time when Nargis had reduced the availability of the local thatch material used for housing. Iron was preferred to tarpaulins for its durability (villagers lamented that tarpaulins ended up having a limited lifespan). But people who received iron sheet lived in flimsy houses for which an iron roof was inadequate, and even a potential risk: even when solidly fixed on the house frame (which was not always the case and AAM had to readdress the issue by providing special guidance notes) the roof can still be blown off, together with the house, if a cyclone hits again. Some families - given the choice - would have prioritized other forms of intervention rather than shelter. The leader of a village had calculated that money invested in buying tin roofing would have been enough to procure local materials for *all* the village, and still leaving some money for other interventions.

### Issues for consideration

For ActionAid (international)

- In all recent responses to disaster happening around the Bay of Bengal (Tsunami response in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, SIDR in



Bangladesh and now Nargis in Myanmar) ActionAid did some work around shelter. Shelter is not one of the key areas of expertise highlighted by ActionAid, but because of the high capital investment that shelter requires and because ActionAid had repeatedly engaged in this, it is recommended that AA take stock on its work on shelter so far. The result of such work should not be the establishment guidelines for response of a technical nature, i.e. how to best build transitional shelter. It should rather look at broader issues of how to balance self-help/ technical input when promoting shelter; it might consider land issues; it might question alternatives to shelter construction to reduce disaster (creation of collective shelters, strengthening of early warning system for evacuating the area...). This learning should lead ActionAid to think more broadly on how to engage (or not to engage) around shelter and housing issues

#### For AAM

- AAM made a strategically sound choice in **moving out of food distribution** early in the programme, and invest money in livelihood instead.
- In some cases the priorities and way of working of partners prevailed over these preferred by AAM, and this has been problematic when it has **reduced the space for consultation** with beneficiaries. AAM should consider for future response stronger MOU and agreements around key principles of interventions, to prevent this from happening.
- AAM management pointed out that partnering with organizations capable to **distribute cash** (e.g. micro-credit ones) was an important asset in the response, but partnership with such organization has now been terminated because of the different views. This seem to signal the urgency for AAM to strategically think of how cash could be best handled in future emergencies, either by setting guidelines and principles, or by seeking for potential partners. Analysis of cash work by AAM would also be an important contribution for the sector, as it has been recognized, in the social monitoring study, that that "The most effective type of livelihoods assistance has been cash payments to village households"

#### For DEC/ Donors

- Relative **flexibility of funding** was key in allowing AAM to revise its approach: reducing its investment in activities that might create dependency (e.g. food distribution) and moving towards

activities aimed at boosting markets and production (cash distribution / livelihoods). Donors should actively encourage variance, and demand strong analysis of such variance as a way to gain insights and understanding on the dynamics of the response.

## Rebuilding Livelihoods

*"Participation is important not only as global best practice (because communities are best placed to determine their needs and to design a response that will be most adapted to local conditions), but also because the diversity of villages in the Delta demand a local approach" From: PONREPP*

One of the key features of AAM response was its swift move from food distribution towards livelihood support, and strategically this proved to be a good choice, and a better fit with the character of ActionAid (probably better equipped to operate were consultation and participation - and not logistics - have more importance). The move towards livelihoods was in tune with the aspiration of the communities. As the Real Time evaluation pointed out,

"interventions have predominantly focused almost exclusively on donations of goods, services or, in a few instances, cash grants. While community members clearly appreciated this assistance, a frequent refrain in virtually every focus group was "we have nothing to do" – i.e. they needed to restore livelihoods."

There was more than "having nothing to do" that communities were worried about. Delaying intervention on livelihoods at a time when the new crops needed to be planted, would have jeopardized the economy of the "rice bowl of the country" and created a spiral of dependency.

The starting point of AAM response to livelihood was to recognize that livelihoods in the delta area are extremely complex. Individuals might engage in different activities according to the season, hence creating a very intertwined and complex system. In addition, apparently simple activities such as "fishing" are highly specialised and require different tools (e.g. different fishing nets) in different contexts. Support to farming also required contextual

knowledge of the seeds variety suitable for the region. Hence the importance of consultation and participation of the “beneficiaries” in negotiating what aid would serve them most. In the village visited I had found evidence of consultation by partners to beneficiaries, and a sense of satisfaction that the items received helped to restore livelihoods. Both the choice of items and the timeliness of the distribution were good. (Some villagers pointed out that other organizations had sometime provided potentially useful items too early. This meant that the people in more pressing needs decided to sell them rather than storing them. When the same items were distributed at the right time, they were more fully utilized). Villagers also mentioned that partners not only consulted / held meetings in the central location of a village tract (a group of villages), but visited all locations. This was appreciated.

The consultation put in place by the partners cannot of course match up with the extensive consultation processes and livelihood work that fellows managed to put in place in a limited number of villages (which I could not visit), where - in addition to negotiating what livelihood items were preferred by people - they also mobilized them toward collective action. Of course a long term presence is a much more resource intensive way of working, and it would be interesting to check, maybe in conjunction to partners who operated with lighter modes in livelihood response, what are the comparative benefits and challenges emerging when contrasting the approaches.

### **Reverting to the status quo?**

I felt, in my limited exposure on the ground, that most interventions were mainly about reverting to the “status quo”, to the conditions and roles that pre-existed in the area. This meant that means of living were given to people in relation with their previous job. The fishermen received fishing nets, the farmers seeds and fertilizers, the carpenters tools (and it is to be noticed that often the roles that received more support were these held by men). Still, landless people - who had no implement before - gained in the process: they received some means for subsistence in the distribution. And widows or female headed household were also targeted as a priority.

But, as some villagers pointed out, the different cost of different equipment could be an issue: some (and possibly the people who were most well established before the emergency) did receive comparatively more resources. At times I was told that this did not really matter, because there was a sense of justice in giving back to people what they had lost, even when it resulted in an unequitable resource spread. Others had different opinions on that. The issue is an open one.

It is of course important to assist a community in getting back to where they were before an emergency. It is important to put skilful farmers and fishermen in a position to start business again so that the local economy starts to work again and job opportunities are created.

A question however remains, for an organization like ActionAid whose mandate is to reach the poorest and most marginalized: to what extent relief could have helped to also advance the rights and the position of the most marginalized? And, linked to that: to what extent the potential of women had really been fostered? AAM had worked to ensure that their voice and rights could be heard, that they were consulted. But, even so, their voice and real space for negotiation might have been limited when the priority for the “community” was to respond to a pressing need to resume the previous status quo. AAM might not have had space and possibility to really engage with this question in the acute phase of relief (and it would be interesting to check how fellows managed to work on this in comparisons with partners!). But this question must become serious matter for consideration as the programme moves into rehabilitation. AAM seems keen to tackle it: the second phase of its programme will focus on targeting poor and marginalized individuals in remote communities.

In a context where aid comes to communities from different sources, according to different processes and targeting criteria, how are “equity” and “justice” negotiated - within a village, but also across them? And by whom? In the Myanmar response distribution from agencies did not end by handing items to the “beneficiaries”. For example, in some cases pooling and redistribution of such items had happened. In others, distribution lists were negotiated by villagers taking in consideration who had already received what. I feel that - because of its engagement

towards consultation and participation – AAM might have gathered important insights on how communities negotiated aid distribution, and how they tackled (or conflicted over) the inequalities that might arise. Such insights would be unvaluable in designing the way forward, but, if made explicit, could also bring important learning for the humanitarian sector.

### ***Issues for consideration***

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For ActionAid (international)

- The deployment of **fellows and volunteers** in response to the emergency allowed for very interesting dynamics of response. ActionAid should look closely at this modality of intervention to understand if and to what extent it is replicable and could be applied to other emergencies (maybe linked to comparable forms of leadership development put in place elsewhere).

For AAM

- AAM worked on livelihoods in a strategic manner, recognizing that they need to be tackled **holistically**, and with strong awareness of the local conditions. **Consultation and participation** were the foundation of its successful engagement.
- AAM had stipulated that **women** had to be given full access to consultations, and that their specific needs had to be considered. In some cases women groups had been created for consultation. However, overall, the main investments on livelihoods seem to have been determined by men, and women accepted that this was an adequate way to proceed.
- AAM had already produced a study of the work done by **fellows** on livelihoods. It would be interesting to contrast it and compare it with the consultation mechanisms that were put in place by partners. It would be an opportunity for sharing learning, but also to extract varied options on how to tackle livelihoods.
- Can consultation alone bring in more **equity** when the priority of a community is to revert back to the old status quo? Where should investment go: to the well-off that can put in motion the economy and create jobs and goods? Or to the poor and marginalized, who might lack the capacity of becoming an engine for growth for the whole community? What is the real space for an organization to work on this at a time of emergency? And what space does open up in the rehabilitation phase?

- AAM might be in a position to offer interesting reflections and learning on the **negotiation process of communities** around livelihood support. It is important that the experience held by staff, partners, fellows is shared and discussed, and possibly further disseminated as a way to stimulate reflection in the sector.

### **Psychosocial work**

As it is now common practice in many programmes of ActionAid, psychosocial support was an underlying characteristic of the response. Psychosocial support was provided by means of specific programmes, but, first and foremost, it was also an “attitude” and a way of engaging with people. Most of the work around psychosocial issues had been implemented directly by AAM, in some cases partners had refused engagement on it. AAM is now in the process of holding training for volunteers for psychosocial work, and had launched initiative as street theatre on the issue.

AAM provided input at IOM’s request when they were organising a TOT for psychosocial volunteers and responded to demands for materials – by UNESCO, SCF, Burnett, Myanmar Medical Association, IOM. At Yangon level – AAM is part of psychosocial working group led by IOM with 20-30 organisations. In Labutta AAM heads the psychosocial working group and in Pyapon AAM is a member.

### ***Issues for consideration***

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For ActionAid/AAM

- Continue to engage with psychosocial work and help to advance a vision of psychosocial work integral to relief support. Continue to explore opportunities to build momentum / alliances around this issue.





## Looking forward: strategic issues

A social audit of a DRR project undertaken by Ta Nyi village is taking place. The villagers from nearby Kyaung Su check budgets and monitoring data in an open public assembly.

The framework I set for evaluation demands to check to what extent DRR and participation – as characterizing niches of excellence for ActionAid – really shaped the programme, and to what extent they underpinned the approaches. It is also important to check how its organizational structure and system had been coherent with its emerging strategic approach.

What emerged is that AAM has been true to its commitments and strived to realize full participation and work towards disaster risk reduction in its work. There are of course still challenges ahead and issues that need consideration. AAM probably was more successful in realizing its commitments when piloting and implementing directly programmes, with staff and fellows. Partnerships have sometime been more problematic. But overall, also when working with partners, AAI had ensured that consultation and participation in the processes was the agreed way of working. This makes its intervention stand out in a context where consultation was the exception more than the norm.

Overall AAM did an outstanding work in putting participation, empowerment and DRR at the centre of its work. In doing so it also modelled innovative ways to respond to emergency. There are important learning to be captured in this: for AAM in defining its way forward, for ActionAid as a whole feed this experience into its future response, but also for likeminded organizations working in humanitarian relief. Hence the emphasis of these evaluation in asking for analysis and learning around these practices, as they contain important insights for AA and for the sector as a whole.

## Participation and empowerment

“So far aid providers have made most of the decisions about who gets what”  
PONREPP p.15

AAM demonstrated that it is possible to involve people in making decisions from the outset of an emergency, and that bringing in the response people with the capacity to mobilize communities can be a powerful asset. This evaluation did not have the scope and the breath to prove this, but conversation with staffs would seem to indicate that the most successful interventions have been these where affected communities had been more intensively mobilized. Change driven by people participation is what really resonates with AAM staff, and examples of these practices is what they more dearly recall about their work so far.

The cornerstone of AAM work on participation and empowerment is the fact that AAM truly believes in people. It believes in its staff – young and committed – and in advancing their values. It believes in the capacities and strengths of affected communities. And it believes in the importance of catalyzing participation with long-term engagement. Most staff holds the strong belief that only by physically being in the community, by staying there at length it is possible to achieve meaningful participation and the deep understanding needed to address strategically the response: hence the choice of working through fellows and volunteers. Programme support officers are also to be found more often in villages rather than in the office. This ethos is very visible in the practice of AAM. It determines the very special character of its response to Nargis.

The challenge has - at times - been to bring in partners to operate in accordance to these principles, and it has not been always possible to achieve the very high standards of consultation and participation AAM is aiming for. AAM has also worked with partners that, at times, shed doubts on the modalities of participation preferred by the organization (e.g. working through individual fellows) and preferred instead to advance their own modalities e.g. building CBOs. Incidentally, AAM is also in the process of building

a few CBOs, such as one for street theatre in support of psychosocial work, and CBOs for disaster management. But so far it seems to have avoided building community organizations when village groups were already existing (which is positive, as the proliferation of committees built by NGOs have been signalled as a problematic issue in the response).

One of the challenges ahead for AAM will be to bring partners along with the organization in its quest for participation and empowerment of affected communities, and this is a critical time to do so.

AAM, building on its practice, had and will have an important role in being a leading example for participation, empowerment and accountability to communities in interagency forums, such as the Accountability and Learning working group (ALWG). It is important that engagement in the group and in similar forums is continued, based on the exchange of sound and tested practices of work. AAM also might have the potential to expand discussion on accountability and participation not only in specialized forums such as the ALWG, but also with donors and amongst the leadership of other organizations in country (e.g. in CD forums).

### **Fellow and volunteers as agents for participation**

AAM invested in forms of communities mobilization based on continuous engagement and protracted presence in villages rather than in quick consultations. Prior to the emergency AAM had engaged in building leadership capacity in Kachin, Kayach and Rakhine areas through its fellowship programme, which essentially was aimed at creating young leaders, capable to organize and mobilize their communities. In May 2008 some of them were deployed to support affected communities at the very inception of the emergency. Their added value was their capacity to pull communities together again, to bring in "action" even when aid was not forthcoming. I am aware that different fellows had different receptions in different areas – and that in some cases their youth has been a challenge – at least initially – in a society where authority often also derives from age. I only could visit one village where a fellow had operated, and people mentioned that his

presence really helped them to overcome their individual sorrows and join forces to work together. Other fellows operated later on in the programme and for a longer period. And in the meantime the training curriculum of the fellows had changed to integrate more solidly participatory vulnerability analysis and action techniques. AAM also developed other modalities to create capacity for local leadership for development, risk reduction and response, such as the shorter trainings for volunteers, supporting their own villages.

Some concerns had been expressed in the past that the fellowship programme – by targeting specific communities and by financing the programme mainly with British money – could have been seen as having a particular political connotation. The Nargis response has been an important opportunity to broaden up the approach, fund it from different sources and target young leaders and volunteers with a more varied background, and with more varied curricula. The Nargis response was also an incentive to more solidly build DRR in the know-how of fellows and volunteers, therefore creating a culture of prevention where DRR is seen not as an add on activity but as an integral part of the baggage of a community mobilizer.

AAM (and ActionAid as a whole) should look closely at this experience in the months to come. Undoubtedly the deployment of fellows and volunteers added value to the programme, but there is the risk of making assumptions about its value and to miss opportunities to fully realize the challenges on potential of this approach by employing it uncritically. In addition to this, it would be interesting to see how different modalities of deployment (facilitation by outsider vs. insiders, long term training vs. shorter term) had played in the response. AAM – with the support of AA should consider modalities of action research about it.

### **Involving the poorest and most marginalized**

AAM had strived to involve the poorest and most marginalized. However, as mentioned beforehand, in some cases distribution might have reinstated the status quo ante rather than helping to challenge it. Women groups have been built, but at times the voices and the priorities of the men were simply more important to



everyone. It seems that despite efforts (and successes!) of AAM in targeting the most marginalized, the task was simply too big. This is fully understandable given the constraints, and there are evident signs that AA is actively trying to further improve its targeting.

To what extent the poorest and most vulnerable people had been really reached by the response is a question that this evaluation could not reply to in the limited time available, and it is a question for AAM. In the experience of staff, targeting of aid to the poorest seemed to have improved in time. At the very beginning everyone was assumed to be in need. Later in the response it started to become clearer who the poorest and marginalized people were. Communities have been engaged and consulted, and tasked to allocate resources so that they could reach the most vulnerable. The second phase of the response of AAM had been designed to reach and support on individual basis these identified as the most vulnerable by their communities, and this will happen in villages that have been less supported so far, so there is a clear drive in targeting the resources to reach these most in need.

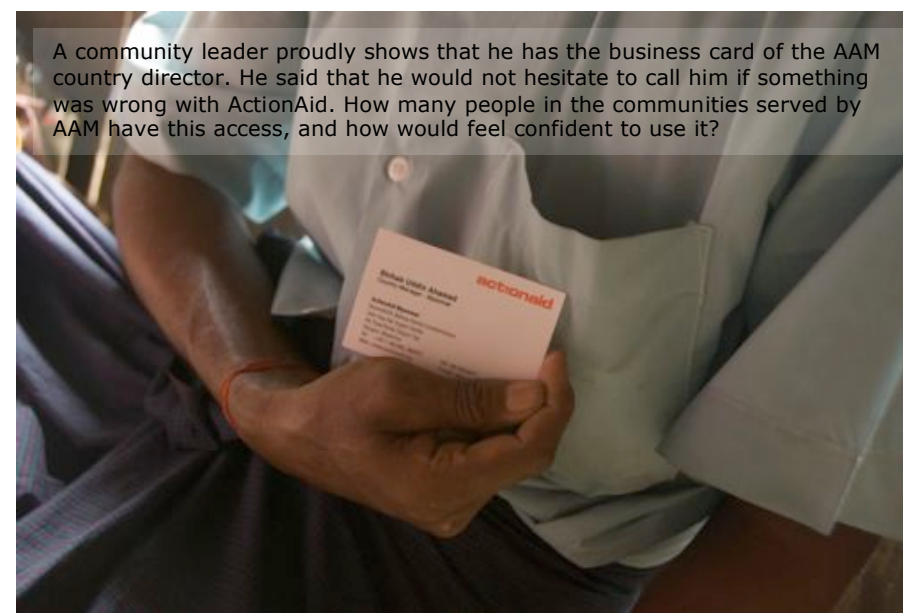
In the first phase, when its targeting was not yet refined to really locate the communities most in need, AAM had sometimes invested resources in working with relative well-off communities (one community visited, for example, had received conspicuous aid in the past year by 27 organizations!). The commitment of AAM Myanmar in accompanying the communities in the long term also meant it might have ended investing considerable resources with better off-communities that should have been saved for the poorest ones. This is not to say that the aid provided in the communities so far was not relevant or useful. But the question is if it would have been even more relevant for other marginalised communities.

A local boat driver provided me with one of the best analysis of why INGOs had failed to reach the most vulnerable people: they end up serving these communities with better access, these who are most educated and know how to ask for help, the relatively large one (as they allow to quickly build up numbers of beneficiaries) and the ones closer to centre of power (e.g. the central communities of a village tract), where consultations are held and money disbursed. And yet – he lamented - one year on,

there are still communities that only received minimal support and still struggling to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

In a context where many agencies are responding, should AA give itself more time for discovering and targeting the “forgotten communities”? Should it conform to high pressure for spending in the earliest phases of response that might distract the organization from the objective or firstly seeking for and reaching the most marginalized? And what could now be the role of AAM in giving a voice to the marginalized communities and in supporting them to get the help they deserve?

## Complaint mechanisms



A community leader proudly shows that he has the business card of the AAM country director. He said that he would not hesitate to call him if something was wrong with ActionAid. How many people in the communities served by AAM have this access, and how would feel confident to use it?

In Myanmar lot of discussion – for example in the Accountability and Learning Working Group - had gone on “complaint mechanisms”, as a way to correct mistakes and compensate people unintentionally harmed by the emergency response. Complaints mechanisms rest on transparent sharing of information about a project and about its outcomes, and in clear procedures on how to file a complaint and receive an answer about it. In

general a clear route for reaching AAM (possibly also bypassing the local level which might feel too close for comfort) and to safely complain has not yet been provided with all people in the assisted communities.

AAM has already gone a long way in ensuring full transparency and participation by all. It is increasingly putting in place systems that ensure that people can be informed and have a say in interventions (e.g. a few transparency boards were put in place, some social audits are being piloted). And communities are not only asked to provide feedback on interventions, they can actually design them. However the issue of complaints does not disappear when participation is enacted, because individuals, especially these who might be marginalised in the process, might still feel the need to readdress perceived injustices. Complaints might even become trickier when directed on a process based on community participation, because they can end up exposing power issues and marginalization within a community. AAM should think how to leave a space for complaints and which does not undermine the dynamics of the process of participation. It is important not to assume full community involvement in projects that – with all best efforts - might still end up to be designed by the “elite” of a village, who has the time and the possibility to fully participate.

A complaint mechanism that is legalistic or simply formal (such as some of the “post box” put in place by other organizations) would be at odd with the existing quality of accountability engagement of ActionAid. So the organization will need to creatively address the issue and break new ground. One possibility might be to use ALPS processes like PRRP. Other possibilities might involve making more strategic use of information boards and opening up effective and trusted communication channels with communities (e.g. by sharing phone numbers of head office, etc)

### ***Issues for consideration***

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#### For AAM / AA

- In Myanmar AA seems to have privileged – at the inception - speed of response over targeting. Devoting most energies to

respond, rather than **targeting** could be still a sound way of working, but it is a bit less “ActionAid”: a distraction in the attempt to reach the most marginalised people. The risk is to work where other organization are already engaging (possibly with stronger logistical capacity!) rather than focus on the communities most likely to be forgotten.

#### For AAM

- **Continue to invest in people**, and in working on their attitudes, behaviours and values. The leadership of AAM has been so far highly committed and inspirational on this, and this deeply influenced the nature of the programme and its drive towards meaningful participation.
- Work more solidly with **partners**, side by side, in building attitudes leading to participatory and empowering modes of work. Mentoring and coaching, rather than training, should be the option of choice. It will be key to share learning about the new approaches that are now being tested by AAM (e.g. social audits).
- Look critically at **volunteer and fellowship** deployments, based on solid research and analysis in representative communities, with a view of identifying and understanding the dynamics put in place by this way of operating. A “story of change” approach - looking at how changes unfolded in time, and at the dynamics of power - might be employed, and AAM had started working on this. It is important that AAM really challenge its own approach, get the views of the communities, and does not take its value for granted.
- Strive to reach to those who have been left out so far. Not always AA M targeted these most in need, but **targeting** had incrementally improved, and should continue to do so.
- Continue to search for ways to give a voice to all members in a community, the most marginalized in particular. Consider if **complaint mechanisms** might serve the purpose.
- Continue to **advocate for improved consultation and participation** in the response, and disseminate practices in existing forums such as the ALWG

#### For Donors

- Current modalities of disbursement of funding might encourage organization to **spend a lot quickly**, therefore disproportionately targeting the communities who are more accessible or are more capable to attract funding.

## DRR

As the response unfolds, DRR becomes, increasingly, a central feature of the response of AAM. Recruiting a skilled advisor also helped to catalyze energies around it and to create steady engagement and sound practices. AAM is now testing community lead planning for DRR work in several villages, using the PVA (Participatory Vulnerability Analysis) approach of ActionAid.

So far the PVA (which involves multilevel planning and action) has been implemented at the village level only, and has not been stepped up to build shared plans for action with institutions at the local / district level. Of course the peculiarities of the context in Myanmar will have to be considered when strategizing how to move forward, but it is important that AAM, in future months, manages to create stronger linkages with government and non government agencies that have a role to play in reducing the vulnerabilities of people, and in further building the capacity of government officials. This commitment would also be in line with recommendations put forward in the Real Time Evaluation of the response in Myanmar, which says that

“The international community should support the development of a national DRR strategy for Myanmar, facilitating learning and technical expertise as appropriate. This strategy should have a robust community level component and immediate priority given to community consultations around DRR, not only to improve planning, but to help alleviate widespread psychosocial stress...”

The quotation above also points to the linkages amongst DRR and psychosocial work, a point that was well captured by AAM, which linked strongly elements of both. DRR work not only was an opportunity for joint planning and community mobilization. The village meetings were an opportunity for dissemination of basic information on preparedness, badly needed by people. These helped them to rebuild their confidence.

AAM also had a very active role in creating awareness of DRR and in setting interagency forums to advance practice and for advocacy with the Government (e.g. the Disaster preparedness and Response Education Working Group)



A leaflet with suggestions on how to prepare for disaster had been broadly distributed in the communities served by AAM

### *Issues for consideration*

For ActionAid (international)

- **PVA materials** (e.g. PVA guide) need to be finalized and made available. In addition, more agile materials than a full-fledged guide need to be produced and be ready for dissemination.
- ActionAid should **capture the learning from AAM** efficiently and ensure that it is shared broadly within the organization to build a body of sound practice.
- Supporting AAM in deploying strong **capacity for DRR** in the programme has been a major asset for Myanmar, and helped to demonstrate that deep practices for DRR can be embedded in the early stages of response. Consider how this support can be provided in future responses.
- AAM - in conjunction with other organizations - was instrumental in creating a **resource group on DRR**, and this leading role should be taken in other emergencies.
- Continue to foster **linkages for collaboration**, mutual support and learning amongst AAM and other countries where DRR work is taking place



For AAM

- AAM was one of the forerunners in implementing DRR in the emergency and should continue to push the sector forward, through advocacy for DRR and by **sharing innovative practices.**
- An understanding of PVA as an “assessment” someone creeps in the recent booklet “reducing disaster links”. It is important that **PVA is understood and presented as the whole process**, i.e also involving planning and implementation. It is also important to emphasize further the importance of involving stakeholders at **multiple levels.**
- AAM should strategically design interventions on DRR and also use its role in DRR groups to influence the creation of district and **nationwide strategies on DRR.**



Checking the details of a disaster risk reduction plan during a social audit

## Strengthening systems

### ALPS

Given the political circumstances of the country, it had been initially suggested that mechanisms of participation, accountability, and empowerment could be tricky to put in place in Myanmar. However, as the PONREPP produced by the Tripartite Group pointed out, the decisive factors in determining level of community participation was not the local political context, but the attitudes of the organization involved.

“Rather than resulting from particular local circumstances, an analysis of these models suggests that the different approaches adopted are largely a consequence of the programming norms of the assistance agencies involved”.

The organizational culture of ActionAid was coherent with the imperative for participation and empowerment demanded in the emergency. AA had a planning system, ALPS (Accountability, Learning and Planning System, see appendix 3) which is modelled precisely on the need to ensure the full participation of “beneficiaries”. And the practice was aligned to this: mechanisms for consultation were set up early in the response.

The starting point of ALPS is to put the poor and excluded people at the centre of the planning and reflection processes as active actors. ALPS strive to ensure that such processes (e.g. strategies, plans, reflections, reviews) respond first and foremost to the need of accounting back to and learning with the beneficiaries of an intervention, in the belief that this will improve the quality of the programmes as well as the accountability to other stakeholders. Practicing ALPS require strong personal commitment by staff and personnel, and the fostering of shared values in the organization. The ActionAid office in Yangon, as well as its field operations had in fact fostered this culture, amongst staff, which is a strong achievement at a time of fast growth of the organizations and in times of emergencies, when the external pressure is sometimes put on the “efficiency” aspects rather than on participation.

But interestingly, despite the fact that the principles and values of ALPS (accountability in particular) had been key in shaping up the response, the system as a whole was not yet known in detail by the staff. They had de facto worked in alignment with the system by “playing it by ear” rather than based on a strong understanding of it. It is therefore suggested that AAM now invest in introducing ALPS as a way to add structure and insights to the approaches that it is already starting to enact. When adopting ALPS, AAM should recognize that:

- The planning process put in place by communities themselves, for example through DRR/PVA work, are an integral part of the culture of mutual accountability forested by ALPS. They are in fact the realization of ALPS in communities.
- Learning derived from accountability engagements at the community level (e.g. experience in social audits, etc) should be used by AAM to create Participatory Review and Reflection Processes where the organization makes itself fully accountable to partners and communities.
- Partners did not know ALPS, but would benefit from exposure to it. Some, in an attempt to equip themselves with the tools used by international organizations, are now getting logframe trainings because “this is what the donors use”. They are quite articulated in expressing the limitation of the logframe, but nevertheless at risk of passively adopting it for lack of alternatives. Exposure to ALPS would provide them with a sound and structured alternative to substitute or complement output driven processes.

### Feeding information in ALPS processes: the importance of sound monitoring system

Effective monitoring systems are important as the base of accountability processes. At this stage AAM still lacks effective monitoring systems, tracking achievements and linking them effectively with financial information. This does not necessarily mean that it lacks accountability (as sound processes are put in place with community to track progress), or that it lacks information. It rather lacks a way to *consolidate* information on its operation and effectively pull it together for analysis.

AAM is at a stage where it can demonstrate strong accountability to beneficiaries, but then cannot effectively track outcomes of programme so that they can be effectively systematized and accessed. This is a matter that should be addressed as a priority in AAM.

It is recommended that in the process of establishing monitoring frameworks and systems:

- The overall monitoring framework is aligned with the Global Monitoring Framework of ActionAid and with the understanding of change presented there (see appendix 4). The GMF is already defacto the underlying structure informing the understanding of change behind AAM approaches that have relevance for the programme (e.g. Participatory Vulnerability Analysis), so adaptation should be easy.
- Monitoring is not to be dumbed down to be “the collection of some quantitative data”, but needs to be understood as a more holistic process, tracking different dimension of change, and capable to focus on significant changes.
- The monitoring system should not mainly oriented at measuring outputs. It should rather seek to keep under check broader outcomes, such as the quality of the engagement of AA with communities or the quality of plans produced by communities themselves.
- Indicators and processes for monitoring should designed in conjunction with partners and communities, so that there is no gathering information for the sake of doing so. There is a risk, when putting in place a monitoring system, that it shaped by perceived information needs in the main office, that might not match what is achieved in the field and ultimately just add rigidity to programming and monitoring.
- The monitoring system of AAM should be linked to the monitoring system at the community level. It was interesting to observe how each community leader had a notebook where the assistance received by the village was recorded. It would be interesting to build on this attitude to monitoring at the community level to equip people with better tools to understand change.

ActionAid should use its current standpoint – i.e. quality accountability processes with communities and deep understanding of the reality of the field – to design an innovative monitoring system that helps supporting the ongoing process rather than trivializing them with simplistic modalities of data gathering. As the organization seems to move towards a discipline of establishing plans with communities as a way of working (e.g. through its PVA work), monitoring should first of all check the efficiency of the process (quality of plans, involvement of people according to shared criteria, issues of coverage). It should also aim at improving the quality of community plans (make sure that communities clarify their own objectives and select their own indicators). A possible way forward would then be to build on this mapping of broad engagements, and rather than to seek overall indicators (which would clash with the definition of indicators by the community themselves) use the information gathered to produce deeper and contextualized analysis of change.

## Sharing learning

One added value of working on ALPS is that – in addition to accountability – it gives prominence to learning. Opportunities to add reflectivity and learning in organizational processes would be now timely, as a way to take stock of the experience so far and distil lessons for AAM, for ActionAid as a whole and for likeminded organizations.

AAM already produced very good documentation of its approaches, and the use of ALPS in conjunction of methodologies for understanding of change might further improve the quality of its products.

## *Issues for consideration*

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### For ActionAid (international)

- Look at AAM as a case in point where **ALPS** has been de facto applied in the emergency response, and derive lessons for replicating this in future engagements.
- As AAM moves into a more reflective mode and seek to analyse the experience so far and the change produced, ActionAid (and in



particular the IECT team) should accompany and support the country in the process. There is important **learning** to be derived from the response in Myanmar, in particular on DRR, modalities of accountability, support to community mobilization (e.g. fellows, volunteers) that are valuable for the whole organization.

#### For AAM

- Ensure that **ALPS** is known and used by AAM and strengthen the IASL function.
- Ensure that **partners** are exposed to ALPS and the system is used in clarifying mutual engagements and principles of work.
- Continue to **build practices for accountability**, and document them. In particular, work towards creating processes for accountability by AAM to partners and communities (PRRPs)
- Based on the experience accumulated so far on modalities of engagement and accountability as per ALPS, build a case for the system when **negotiating with donors** and in engagements with other international organizations. ALPS helps to build a case for proposals and plans looking at the quality of the engagement process with communities rather than to outputs only. Some donors in Myanmar already had expressed interests for modelling how issues of accountability to the communities could be build more solidly in proposals, and AAM would be in a position to advance such practices.
- Invest more in the **learning** aspects. AAM already had produced very interesting documentation, looking at its own practice, and this engagement should continue and be deepened in the months to come

#### For donors

- Consider engaging with AAM in defining modalities of work around proposals and projects that seeks to gauge and **understand quality of engagement with beneficiary** as a proxy for quality work.
- Create **learning opportunities** for different organizations operating under the same funding. For example staff had mentioned that it would be useful to share experience with other organization with DEC funding



Village leaders keep track of the aid delivered by all organization active in the village: they record information about what is received as well as information on distributions.

## Expanding influence

Most of the work done by AAM so far had happened at the village level, and the challenge is now how to shape the response so that it can also have a broader remit, linking village work to district and national levels.

When looking the approach of AAM vis-à-vis the Global Monitoring Framework of ActionAid, what seems in fact to emerge is that linkages have been created amongst AAM with various institutions at different levels, but solid work leading to influence and change the institutions above the village level (government institutions but also non governmental ones and, potentially, private business) are still lacking. Potentially more can also be done to link local work to international advocacy. There are however interesting areas of work that are starting to appear.

Interesting progress had been made through the DRR pilot work in linking effectively various villages through social audit, with the potential of creating bonds amongst them as well as shared learning. The creation of such networks amongst villages around common issues could be strengthened in the months to come.

In parallel, the work gone in training volunteers and community mobilizers, which will work in coordination in the months to come, has considerable potential for creating opportunities for action and change above the village level.

The knowledge that AAM is also starting to accumulate on underlying causes and leverage points towards the reduction of vulnerability will be an important asset for advocacy with national and international actors, by AAM or by the citizen themselves.

AAM had involvement with UNDP and Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) on the civil society forum and on DRR and community participation – linking to ADPC's direct work with government on the national plan of action. AAM has done a lot at

workshops and clusters (DRR, psychosocial, accountability and learning...) to presenting its work and models.

AAM, with its groundbreaking work has also put itself as a leader on DRR and accountability. AAM had been active in interagency forums advancing these, in workshops and clusters, and in training for government officials. It gained strong reputation for its practices indicating that modelling based on practice is one of the strongest assets for the organization. This indicates that ActionAid plays to its strengths when - rather than going for a "blanket approach" - it seeks to carefully craft and model innovative approaches, working in the interstices of the response. AAM might have an important role in actively seeking for these forgotten and left out by the response, in giving them a voice and making them visible.

### *Issues for consideration*

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#### For ActionAid (international)

- Work closely with AAM in seeking opportunities to give international resonance to issues emerging from AAM engagement, in particular as part of the PVA work.

#### For AAM

- Seek to **expand its area of engagement** and influence beyond the village, making use of the networks that are starting to appear and of the linkages from the local to the international level that the PVA will make visible.
- Continue engagement in **interagency forums** and networks to advance issues such as DRR and accountability. Actively seek for forums where to advance also psychosocial issues.

## Some final points for consideration

Based on the TOR, I highlight here some final points for consideration.

### **Speed of response (for relief phase only)**

AAM was very quick in stepping up its response to Nargis. This is outstanding 1) given the contextual challenges and 2) considering that AAM had to build its organizational capacity in parallel. International support was key in the process. However speed of response might have come at the expense of targeting and process, in the earliest phases.

### **Focus and impact on most vulnerable people**

AAM had worked towards reaching the most vulnerable people, and had emphasized to all partners the need to focus on them. It is constantly improving 1) its capacity to reach the most vulnerable and also 2) to negotiate with communities that emphasis is to be given on the most marginalized. There are in fact challenges to the extent to which focus on the most marginalized could be achieved in earlier phases, when the consultation mechanisms put in place seems to have lead communities to restore the status quo rather than seeking more equality in the first place.

### **Focus on most important needs of the most vulnerable**

In a context where aid seemed to be defined by organizations rather than beneficiaries, AAM managed to provide support based on the needs of people. To do so it also considerably altered its initial strategy, moving resources from food distribution to livelihood support. In some cases AAM could also engage in very deep consultation processes with communities thanks to its "fellows" and this helped to define quite complex livelihood support strategies. Partners had been lead to consult beneficiaries, and only in these cases where the handouts have not been fully negotiated (e.g. shelter), the support seemed to be less successful. AAM also responded to less tangible – but equally important - needs through its psychosocial approach. This support – as the support on DRR seemed to be appreciated by communities.

### **Integration of Women Rights**

AAM made specific demands to partners to ensure that women needs and rights could be addressed. It had established women groups and targeted vulnerable women. It demanded presence of women in the committees established, and deployed female fellows. However, overall, the delivery of aid seemed to be mainly driven by the priorities defined by the men – with the tact agreement of women - and system to track efficiently within AAM what aid was specifically directed to advance women rights are still lacking.

### **Community Participation**

AAM explored various modalities to enact community participation and mobilization, and it is important that ActionAid as a whole take stock on this. AAM also portrayed itself in Myanmar as a powerful advocate and practitioner of community participation and accountability practices, and it should continue to model on this.

### **Capacity – building of communities and partners**

AAM is at a juncture when it needs to define a strategy of engagement with the partners. It had organized some support initiatives so far, but overall the support could be strengthened. Capacity building should include systems, principles and values of ALPS. Modalities of support through joint work, accompaniment, coaching might also be considered to share learning around the innovative practices of work modelled by ActionAid in Myanmar.

### **Transparency and accountability**

AAM had put accountability and transparency at the centre of its engagement, and it is testing practices for further enhance this (e.g. social audit for DRR projects). Further mechanisms (e.g. more widespread use of transparency boards, which had only been used in some locations; establishment of "complaint mechanisms")



	might also be considered. The adoption of ALPS in country might also help to strengthen participatory reviews and reflection, and mutual accountability of AAM with partners and communities.
<b>Technical standards</b>	AAM had rightly related on participation to define its deliverables, hence given the right emphasis to Sphere <i>standards</i> (in particular the common standards) rather than blindly refer to their suggested <i>indicators</i> . In that it demonstrated a more mature understanding of the standards than other organizations. More attention in communication international standards and guidelines should have been given when relating to partners.
<b>Impact on root causes / sustainability</b>	When working on livelihood AAM seemed to pose considerable attention on the complexities of the livelihood system, and this should lead to more sustainable and contextualized interventions. The ongoing work on DRR has lot of potential in addressing root causes of vulnerability.
<b>Advocacy and policy work integration</b>	There are of course challenges in advocacy and policy work in the context of Myanmar, and AAM should exert caution when engaging with it. AAM had started to establish relationships with government bodies, for example through training, and there is room for manoeuvre – in connection with other organization – on DRR work. It has also been suggested that in Myanmar the advocacy work should not only be directed at government, but should also seek to engage with powerful business cronies that had – incidentally – also an important role in the response.
<b>Coordination with other agencies</b>	AAM coordinated through cluster and other interagency groups in the course of the response. It had a leading role in setting up and/or engaging in the work of interagency initiatives on Disaster Risk Reduction, Psychosocial Work and Accountability and Learning, towards common action, exchange of practices, advocacy.
<b>Coordination with and support from within AA</b>	AAM and ActionAid had very strong linkages, mainly through the Asia regional office and the IECT. The input from AA was instrumental in setting up the programme, but also in building in capacity and learning from other emergencies. The work done by AAM now needs to gain visibility within AAI because it has much interesting learning to offer.
<b>Disaster risk reduction achieved</b>	It is of course not possible at this stage to gauge if DRR has been achieved. What is evident is that DRR is getting more and more integrated in the programme. One challenge will be to broaden up the work on DRR to focus not only on cyclones but also to other risks that the community might be facing.
<b>Conflict sensitivity</b>	This evaluation did not look in depth at conflict. The context of Myanmar, however, might present some challenges to consider, because of the political context and of the ethnic mix of the country.
<b>Quality of project management</b>	AAM it at a stage where it need to invest in strengthening its own systems. It needs to adopt more consciously ALPS and also to set up monitoring systems. This needs to be done in such a way not to straightjacket the programme and dumb it down with bureaucratic procedures. The challenge will be to build on the capacity of analysis that undoubtedly exists in the programme already. Partners should be accompanied in the process.
<b>Grant and donor relationship management</b>	Grant and donor management have overall been satisfactory, even if some issues had appeared. Stronger sharing of donor requirements and practices to partners might have helped. The capacity of AAM to argue for and negotiate change in proposals with donors as the conditions on the ground changed was key in ensuring adherence of programme with community needs. AAM might now have a role in working with donors towards establishing future engagement which continues to respond to community needs and are measured on the quality of participation and engagement with communities – rather than only on outputs - as per ALPS.

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# Appendixes





# Appendix 1

## Draft Evaluation report produced for ActionAid Myanmar

### 01. BACKGROUND:

Myanmar is the largest country in mainland South-East Asia with a total land area of 676,578 sq km, and a population of 51.5 million. On 2 and 3 May 2008, cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar with a wind speed over 200 km/h and storm surges over 5 meters, which affected more than 2.4 million people. The Post-Nargis Joint Assessment suggests that official death toll was 84,537, with 53,836 people missing and 19,359 injured<sup>1</sup>.

Out of an estimated 7.35 million people living in the affected areas, 2.4 million people were severely affected by the cyclone. Estimates suggest that more than 800,000 people have been displaced, with some 260,000 people living in camps or settlements throughout the Delta in the initial days after the cyclone<sup>2</sup>.

The cyclone not only killed lives and destroyed physical assets, it impacted heavily to increase food insecurity due to damages happened to agriculture sector. As the community was not prepared at all, the Nargis was a great shock, which had a huge psychosocial impact on affected population as many of them lost their relatives, houses, assets, etc.

Capacity of reaching affected people with is a short period of time found to be very limited as during the evaluation it was told by the community that they have received support after 15 to 20 days of cyclone hit. In fact the NGOs in Myanmar are not prepared to respond to such a massive disaster; in addition government regulations had also contributed to delay the response activities by national and international actors.

However, AAM was in a better position to respond to Nargis as it has been established in Myanmar in 2001 who had already partnership with local NGOs although their work was not covered in the affected areas. In 2006 a programme coordinator for Myanmar was employed, which provided opportunity to expand partnership with various stakeholders. The Myanmar Emergency Response Programme has been supported by ActionAid Emergencies and Conflict Team (IECT), and provided all technical assistance to the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Inter-Agency Real Time Evaluation of the Response to Cyclone Nargis, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008

<sup>2</sup> Post-Nargis Joint Assessment, July 2008

### 02. ACTIONAID APPROACHES IN MYANMAR:

**2.1. Community based:** It is clearly evident that AAM is implementing projects by employing community based approach, which allows women and men to participate in project cycle management. Villagers are found to be involved in planning at community level based on the needs identified by them. This had impacted positively to promote community ownership as well as cooperation with in and between villagers. However, participation of women especially promoting them in leadership role looks limited, which might be the reflection of community structure as officially all the village heads are men. As a progressive organization as well as the capacity of AAM leadership, it is un-doubtable that AAM is in a better position to promote women leadership at community level.

**2.1. Fellowship:** AAM successfully replicated fellowship in Nargis response which was piloted in Kachin and Kayah states in 2006. A fellow is a person with leadership potential who is prepared to work in challenging circumstances and is committed to working for grass-roots development<sup>3</sup>. Currently AAM has 60 young boys and girls working as fellows who had undergone 6-weeks intensive training programme covering the concept and practical knowledge related to sustainable development, voluntary actions, community mobilization, human and women rights, participatory methodologies, leadership and good governance. After successful completion of the training, fellows have been placed at community level to facilitate the change process together with villagers. This initiative has been found as an effective investment for development of human resource in Myanmar, which could be considered as “in-country emergency response pool” for future disasters. Although it was told that some of the fellows have been placed in partner offices, it looks that management of fellows needs attention.

**2.3. Partnership:** AAM has responded to Nargis in partnership with 7 local partners who didn't have prior experience of responding to such a large emergency in Myanmar. It has been come out during the discussion with affected communities that many places AAM partners are the first to reach them in need after the cyclone. Each AAM partner has implemented projects according to an agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which clearly outlined roles of both parties. However, it has been noticed that the MoU doesn't indicate sources of funds and donor compliances. As part of MoU, AAM had provided a numbers of documents to partners such as project concept, work plan, budget, etc. which is a good practice. However, it would have been more effective if documents like NGO Code of Conduct, gender policy, etc. This could serve double purposes, firstly these documents could perform as awareness raising tool on humanitarian principles, and secondly AAM could use this opportunity to monitor the implementation of humanitarian principles by grassroots partners.

**2.4. Direct Operation:** Although AAM believes in working with local organizations, the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Psychosocial components of Nargis response are implemented directly by AAM. The concept of DRR is new to the

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<sup>3</sup> ActionAid Myanmar newsletter, March 2, 2009

country, and AAM employed an expert from out side of Myanmar to promote issues of DRR as well capacity building of local counterparts, which had added value to draw attention of government and other stakeholders. Similarly, AAM has successfully brought its global experience on psychosocial support in Nargis response.

Nargis response:

### 03. NARGIS RESPONSE:

Soon after the Nargis, ActionAid Myanmar with the technical and managerial support from IECT, Asia Regional office and AAI has raised GBP £1,834,255 of funds to provide relief support to communities in the Ayeyarwady delta. Major donors of AAM response activities are DEC and ECHO who provided 37.48% and 20.90% total fund respectively. In addition, AAM has received funding support from Maurant Foundation and AusAid, who contributed respectively 5.46%, 9.31% of total funding. ActionAid raised through their own appeal around 15% of the response fund for Myanmar. In addition, AAM was supported by Austcare, SN Foundation and AAGIRE. Below are the finding of each secoral intervention made by AAM.

**3.1. Food distribution:** AAM has provided food relief by the funding from DEC and Austcare to 300 affected villages through 4 local partner organizations benefiting approximately 65000 population. The following food items were distributed.

- Rice
- Cooking oil
- Vegetable
- Tea
- Can fish
- Salt
- Tea
- Chili powder.

During the discussion with beneficiary groups, it has been found that AAM partner organizations had consulted with people to before providing the food items, which is a clear indication of emphasizing on the priority needs. It is also noted that the recipients of food items expressed their satisfaction with the quality of foods distributed. However, during the discussion with staff and beneficiaries, it is noticed that partner organizations have distributed food items with out a proper guideline, which is a potential risk to meet Spehere Standard as well as maintaining quality and quantity.

**3.2. Non food relief items:** AAM provided non food items to 167 villages through 4 local partners by the support from DEC, Austcare and ECHO. The following items were distributed:

- Mosquito nets
- Cloths
- Umbrella

- Rain coat
- Suite case
- Blankets
- Utensils
- Sleeping mat
- Thermo flask

There are evidences found that AAM together with implementing partner organizations ensured participation of affected people in identifying essential items they need. This has been clearly reflected in the list of items, for example; people in the affected villages use to take tea frequently, and they were in need of thermos, which has been provided. In addition, the beneficiaries expressed the need of having suite case to keep their valuable items, which has also been provided by AAM. However, few essential items could have been added such as match box, candles, culturally appropriate sanitary napkins for women and adolescent girls, etc. There was no specific guideline found for NFR1 distribution, which might contributed to over look the special needs for women and children.

**3.3. Shelter:** AAM supported temporary shelter through 4 local partner organizations in 190 villages by funding from DEC, Austcare and ECHO. Shelter materials such as corrugated iron sheets, plastic tarpaulins and building materials provided to 8000 families benefiting approximately 32000 people. The beneficiary groups told during the meeting them in the villages that the shelter support they received from AAM partners were the only means of protection during the difficult time they were passing with out a shade on their head. AAM and partner organizations promoted use of local available materials to build the houses, which was considered very much cost effective. The recipients of shelter materials provided their own labours to construct their own houses, which was an opportunity for them to exercise freedom to decide on size, materials, timeframe, etc. The villagers also recognized that the shelter items played a key role to support each other to re-build their huts/houses as young people came forward to help the beneficiary to gather/collect materials, transport them from one location to another, providing free labours, etc. It has also been expressed by beneficiaries and government authority at village level that the shelter support has been received by most vulnerable people affected by Nargis. AAM partners maintained effective coordination at village level and contributed to ensure DRR and livelihood issues are considered while building houses. For example; in a discussion with village head and government official in Ma Ngay Gye of Pyapon, it was told that families who were living in most vulnerable locations are brought in to the safer places with out affecting livelihood options for them.

Although AAM and partners have done an excellent work by providing shelter support to the most vulnerable families, however, specific guideline was not given to partners or communities to implement the project. For example; in a visit by ECHO found that the construction of tin roofed houses lack technical guidance, which increased further risks as the roofs could be a potential cause for injury and death in future cyclone/storm.

**3.4. Cash for work:** AAM implemented this project in 167 villages through 3 local partner organizations from the funds provided by DEC and ECHO. According to various records and discussion with AAM team and beneficiaries, 15-20 days work was generated for affected men and women engaging 5300 families, which benefited approximately 21000 people. During the discussion with staff members of AAM, it has been told that women and were given equal wages for their labours under the cash for work activities. Following major activities were carried out:

- Building damaged houses
- Road repairing
- Repairing bridges
- Debris cleaning
- Re-establishing drainage systems
- Cleaning and repairing water sources

During the meeting with beneficiary groups, village head man, government officials, it was found that AAM and partners were quite effective in mobilizing community to come together in re-building process. Most vulnerable families who were most in need of cash support were identified by community. A beneficiary group of the village Tae Eai Kuyone Su of Pyapon told that the cash support was very helpful for them to meet the additional needs which were not included in the relief package by various organizations. This gave them opportunity to exercise their right to make decisions by themselves.

Although the cash for work has huge positive impact in the re-building process, the partners lack proper implementation guideline.

**3.5. Livelihood support:** This component of Nargis response has been implementing by AAM's 5 local partners in 240 villages benefiting 3556 families approximately 14000 people. The support provided from the funds received from DEC, Austcare, AusAid and Mourand Foundation. The livelihood support provided in the forms of cash grants, which is an example of providing space for affected beneficiaries to make their own decisions. AAM fellows and partner staff are involved in mobilizing community, helping them to identify most vulnerable families for livelihood support. Apart from fellows, AAM together with partners have started developing a pool of facilitators from the village, in consultation with community who will play key role to facilitate community groups to function effectively to carry out livelihood and other thematic activities.

During the evaluation, it has been found that AAM is in the process of conducting participatory assessment through which 1000 most vulnerable families will be identified for livelihood support in Kyun Thar Yar of Bogale. Community Volunteers/facilitators have been trained in each village for village level planning. Following criteria has been developed for livelihood support:

- Poor, landless woman-headed and other marginalized households that rely on agricultural wage labour, small-scale gardens and backyard farming of pigs, chickens, and ducks.

- Landless farming families who rent land, who have lost their major assets (draught animals, farm implements, and seeds) and or those whose small land holdings may be temporarily unusable due to salinity, sand or silt intrusion and debris.
- Fishery dependent families who have lost their boats and equipment and/or fish processing equipment.

It has been noticed that AAM and partner organizations are actively involved in facilitating the process of rebuilding the livelihood of the affected families. However, no specific guideline for livelihood work has been developed yet, which is an essential for monitoring the progress and impact of the intervention.

**3.6. Psychosocial support:** AAM has used funds from ECHO to provide psychosocial support to 143 villages through 170 volunteers recruited from the affected communities who has been trained by the psychosocial expert. During the discussion with staff and partners, it was found approximately 85000 affected people have been benefited from this support. An integrated approach has been employed by AAM to ensure that psychosocial component of the Nargis response is being incorporated in to all interventions.

One of the significant achievements is that AAM developed IEC materials for various actors to promote common understanding on community based psychosocial care. Community based volunteers were highly involved in developing huge numbers of case studies, which had become learning tool for affected people. For example, the case studies were translated in to local language and incorporated in to psychosocial training manual.

It should also be noted that the psychosocial support was given across all category of affected people such as women, men, children including people/children with disabilities. Good coordination was maintained by AAM with other organizations involved in psychosocial activities such as IOM, World Vision, Ministry of Social welfare, etc.

**3.7. Disaster Risk Reduction:** This component is one of the very useful and timely initiatives by AAM, which has been implemented in 13 villages in Pyapon, and found to be semi-operational. A good number of IEC materials have been developed, published and distributed among communities, government departments, INGOs and civil society organizations. AAM has established 13 DRR Task Force at village level, and provided them analytical skills to ensure the affected people identify and analyze the disaster risks in their own communities as well as to take actions to minimize those risks. The fellows of AAM who use to live in the community facilitated to build capacity of the affected people to use various tool especially Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA). For example; people of Tae Eai Kuyone Su village has effectively identified a weak bridge which divided the village in two parts, and potentiality of cutting communication between two parts is very high in case a flood or cyclone hit again. The community has analyzed potential risks and found that in future disasters the bridge will cause hinder to rescue people from other side of the village, which might led towards death of human lives especially women, children



and elderly. It has been found that the community themselves have decided to build the bridge more stronger so that it can absorb future shocks and stand firm in case disaster takes place in future.

AAM has hired an international DRR consultant to guide the team to achieve the objectives of DRR as integrated part of Nargis response. Apart from training on DRR for the affected communities, AAM has conducted national level training for government departments to promote the importance of DRR in the country. In addition, in AAM successfully mobilized resources from prominent organizations such as ADPC, UNDP, Government fire service to facilitate relevant sessions in various training programmes in the field of DRR. During the evaluation, it has been recognized by communities, partner and other actors that AAM has made significant contribution to promote DRR as an essential action for the government, which can reduce vulnerability to disasters who are living Myanmar's long coastal region and flooding and earth quake zones. Due to the global experience as well as country level capacity, AAM was awarded as Co-chair of national DRR Task Force, which clearly indicates the recognition of good work done.

**3.8. Capacity Building:** In Nargis response, capacity building issue has been seen a cross cutting to all interventions made by AAM. According to AAM newsletter published in March 2, 2009, capacity building has been done among 400 village committees in 200 villages affected by Nargis. It was quite evident that the affected communities where the visit paid by the evaluator, did express their opinion that the services provided by AAM combined with training, workshops on various issues concerning rebuilding their social, economic and psychosocial wellbeing. Fellows and volunteers mobilized by AAM had undergone extensive training programme, which impacted positively to strengthen motivation of the young boys and girls to serve for their own communities as well as enriched with theoretical and practical. AAM has equally emphasized on capacity building of partner organizations as well as other civil society organisations so that the response activities are managed according to the plan. In addition, AAM also focused on capacity building of government ministries/department, which might lead to ensure sustainability of the interventions. The main areas of capacity building were:

- Sustainable development
- Community mobilisation
- Human/women rights
- Good governance
- Leadership development
- First Aid
- Participatory Vulnerability Analysis
- Disaster Risk Reduction

#### **4. RESPONSE MANAGEMENT:**

**4.1. Country team:** AAM has developed an energetic team comprised of young women and men who found to be very committed to cause of ActionAid. It was

evident in most of the cases that the staff, fellows, volunteers are very hardworking, committed to take hardship assignments to deliver the result together with local counterparts. The team is very much politically aware and motivated to empower poor and affected communities. The leadership seems very open to listen to the field staff, fellows, volunteers and partners. This created a learning environment with the organization.

**4.2. International Emergencies and Conflict Team (IECT):** Since the Nargis hit in Myanmar, the IECT found very active and supportive to the country team to assess needs and formulate projects and response activities. IECT contributed a lot in raising required funds and mobilizing human resources to support the country team to ensure effective response based on actual needs of the affected people.

**4.3. Information management:** AAM successfully managed the information came from the villages through fellows, volunteers, field staff and partners. For example, AAM produced regular newsletters on response activities, which was very much useful for donors, supporters, government, other NGOs and general population. The case studies produced by fellows and volunteers were effectively used in training courses as learning tool.

**4.4. Partner management:** AAM identified local partners whose reputation in the country found quite well. It has been noticed that the relationship between partners and AAM is very open as a result of open minded leadership in the country. However, there were few issues which needs attention in future for example, partner agreements don't provide references of donor. As ActionAid organizationally committed to humanitarian principles and laws, the partner agreements lack reference materials, which limited partners to learn the humanitarian stands of ActionAid. It has also notice that AAM lacks monitoring of the partners activities. However, recently an international monitoring consultant has been hired to develop the capacity of the team and partners, which is a timely action.

# Appendix 2

## Terms of Reference, Mid – term Evaluation Emergency Response Programme ActionAid Myanmar (AAM)

Project Title: Emergency Response Programme (ERP)  
Duration of the Evaluation: 15 days (16 June 10 July 2009)

### Background

In March 2009 an evaluation process was begun to assess AAM's ERP. A draft report was produced (which is provided) however it was not finalised. This current evaluation will focus primarily on understanding AAM's approach and the process and impact in the field in addition to the previous evaluation consultant's draft report which describes the work with partners and what was delivered. The current evaluation is to explore and analyse the effectiveness of the program, particularly for communities, as well as to look at accountability processes and how these can be improved.

### Introduction

ActionAid International's initiative in Myanmar began in 2001 implementing small projects with local institutions and groups through its Asia Regional Office based in Bangkok, Thailand. A full time expatriate country coordinator was placed in the country only in the beginning of 2007 who was supported by a small group of local volunteers and fellows. The major thrust of AA Myanmar's work, at that time, was in developing young leaders through its Fellowship Programme and implementing small projects in peace building. When Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2008 ActionAid Myanmar quickly began to respond to the disaster with the existing local partners in the disaster hit areas. The enormous impact of the disaster pushed AAM to significantly expand its programmes and human resources within a short period of time to respond to the emergency. From a small normal annual budget of USD 400K; AAM suddenly had to work with USD 3.2 Million to be spent over a period of nine months. Presently, AAM has 16 full time staff members including 5 expatriates working in the Emergency Response Project, and it's programme coverage is in 5 townships working with 410 villages.

### Emergency Response Programme

ActionAid's Myanmar programme started its response to the emergency from 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2008 providing immediate needs of the affected people working with 5 local partners. Funding support was acquired from multiple

donors with the major ones being DEC, ECHO, AusAid through Austcare, ActionAid appeals and other small foundations and institutions. A total of USD 3.2 million was raised for the Myanmar emergency response programme. This programme now supports 140,000 people living in 410 villages in the townships of Pyapon, Bogaley, Ngapudaw, Labutta and Dedeye.

### ***The early emergency response phase covered the following activities:***

- Food
- Non – Food Items
- Temporary Shelter
- First Aid
- Cash for work
- Paddy seeds

### ***The early recovery / rehabilitation phase covers the following:***

- Livelihood support
- Psychosocial support
- Seed support
- Equipment maintenance (farmers & fishermen)
- Capacity building

This emergency response programme is implemented using the rights based approach integrating the values and principles of ActionAid International. Transparency and accountability processes are given high priority as well as involvement of the affected people and major stake holders in the implementation of the programme.

### **Approach of Evaluation:**

The approach of the evaluation will be participatory, involving the community representatives and leaders, partner agencies and ActionAid staff.

### **Objectives of the Evaluation**

I. To evaluate the effectiveness and achievements of the first 9 months of the emergency response and to the extent possible, the current programme in the following terms:

- *Speed of response (for relief phase only)*
- *Focus and impact on most vulnerable people*
- *Focus on most important needs of the most vulnerable*
- *Integration of Women Rights*

- *Community Participation*
  - *Capacity – building of communities and partners*
  - *Transparency and accountability*
  - *Technical standards*
  - *Impact on root causes / sustainability*
  - *Advocacy and policy work integration*
  - *Coordination with other agencies*
  - *Coordination with and support from within AA*
  - *Disaster risk reduction achieved*
  - *Conflict sensitivity*
  - *Quality of project management*
  - *Grant and donor relationship management*
- II. To make recommendations for future emergency management, and to the extent that they are linked, the strategic direction for future programming beyond ERP based on a relief – to – development continuum
- III. To comment on AAM’s response to the DEC Accountability Framework
- IV. To look at the accountability processes and practices and how these can be strengthened
- V. To suggest strategies for, and to the extent possible, document best practices areas and processes, if any

#### **Methodology**

- Conduct review of programme documents (proposals; log frame; budget; contracts; performance reports – both narrative and financial; communication)
- Field visit and discussions with community members, right holders (beneficiaries), local government officials , AAM staff members, partner staff
- Discussions with IECT and ARO staff

#### **Debriefing and submission of reports**

- A debriefing to staff members of AAM to be provided after the completion of the evaluation.
- An electronic draft report to be submitted on 5 July 2009.
- AAM, ARO and IECT to provide feedback on the report by 8 July 2009.
- A final report to be submitted by 10 July 2009 integrating feedback and comments.

#### **Consultant’s Qualification / Experience**

- Emergency response programme experience
- Previous evaluation experience of ERP particularly through participatory evaluation processes.
- Proven track record in related consultancy work



## Appendix 3

### ALPS: Accountability, learning and planning system of ActionAid

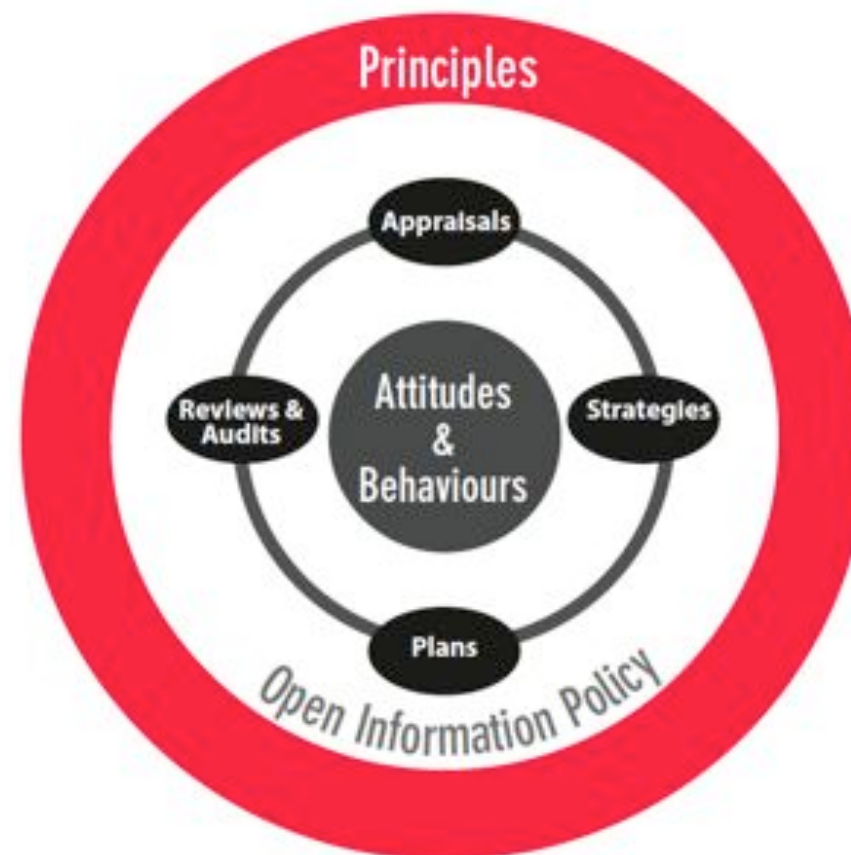
Alps is the Accountability, Learning, and Planning System of ActionAid International. Alps – in both the first edition and this updated version – is designed to:

- deepen our **accountability** to all our stakeholders, particularly to the poor and excluded people with whom we work
- ensure that all our processes create the space for innovation, **learning** and critical reflection, and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy
- ensure that our **planning** is participatory and puts analysis of power relations and a commitment to addressing rights – particularly women’s rights – at the heart of all our processes.

The core elements of Alps are:

- **Principles.** Alps seeks to strengthen accountability to the poor and excluded people and to strengthen commitment to women’s rights. It emphasises critical reflection and promotes transparency. It requires a constant analysis of power.
- **Attitudes and behaviours.** Alps can only be effective if ActionAid staff, volunteers, activists, trustees and partners hold attitudes and behave in ways that fit with our shared vision, mission and values.
- **Organisational policies and processes.** Alps integrates cycles of appraisal, strategy formulation, planning and reviews. Alps also includes auditing processes to further strengthen the accountability of the system. Alps requires transparency in all that we do; this is described in the Open Information Policy.

(from ALPS manual, ActionAid 2006, p. 5)



## Appendix 4

### The global monitoring framework of ActionAid

This framework is developed in line with the commitment and promises stated in our international strategy Rights to end poverty (RTEP). Its purpose is to enable us **to track progress against our international strategy**, RTEP.

This is a framework that provides a set of focused guidelines for gathering, consolidating and analysing data, information and stories about the nature, extent and results of our work. This framework describes the major changes and transformations sought in Rights to End Poverty and asks guiding questions to help us unpack these changes and understand the impact we are having.

This framework **focuses on power and change**. It is a common way of understanding and looking at what kind of changes Rights to end poverty aims to engender. By asking us all to look at change in relation to power relations, it sets the ground for power analysis and to understand the dynamics between power and change.


This framework is intended to be **applicable for all parts of the organisation at all levels**. Therefore, the framework and questions are necessarily broad and generic but specificity and details will naturally come from various units of the organisation. The purpose of this GMF is to inform the monitoring and reporting systems and methods of all parts of the organisation, including country programmes since much of what is here will also be relevant for all who have developed and aligned their strategies and plans in line with the RTEP. International thematic, functional and regional units will use this framework to aggregate, consolidate and analyse data, information and stories against this framework on an ongoing basis. They will naturally have to rely on the relevant information from projects, DAs, DIs and country programmes. In that sense, Country Programmes and Country Directors are expected to incorporate relevant parts and aspects of this GMF in their review, reflection, monitoring and reporting but are not required to produce any parallel or separate report against this GMF.

This GMF is not a substitute for RTEP or ALPS. Instead this is only a **supplementary tool and mechanism to encourage consistent and focussed monitoring** from all parts of the organisation on RTEP.

The effectiveness of this GMF will be enhanced if we take a flexible and **learning approach** whereby we continually- after every annual reporting cycle- review and improve the framework in details.

The effectiveness of this GMF will depend on the creativity and commitment of staff in applying it. Monitoring will only be possible and relevant against plans and strategies that are based on a solid analysis of conditions and position of constituencies (poor and excluded people; AAI divisions and units; or supporters, allies and donors). **Monitoring globally can only happen if we are monitoring locally**. Like ALPS, this framework does not specify monitoring at country/unit level, because this must be developed locally to be relevant.



A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair, looking upwards and to the left. She has a white, circular patch of cream on her right cheek. She is wearing a light pink, ruffled shirt. The background is dark and out of focus, showing parts of other people.

Thanks to all the people I met in Myanmar during the evaluation process, in particular to...

... the staff of ActionAid Myanmar for their assistance, commitment, enthusiasm and good humour,

... ActionAid Partners for their insights,

... the people I had the privilege to meet in the beautiful villages of Oo Moe Thee, Thae Enit Chaung Su, Kan Sate, Kyaung Su, Ta Nat Pin Sate, Ma Ngae Gye and Ta Nyi for their hospitality and for sharing their experiences.

Silva Ferretti  
July 2009