



Emergency Co-ordination Framework
in Vietnam
Key Actors

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List of acronyms

CARE	Care International
CCFCS	Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control
CIDSE	Cooperation Pour le Developpment et Solidarite
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DMT	United Nations Disaster Management Team
DMU	United Nations Disaster Management Unit
ECHIO	The European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EU	The European Union
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PACCOM	People's Aid Co-ordinating Committee
PPC	People's Committee
SCF	Save The Children Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Emergency Fund
VNRC	Vietnam Red Cross
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WVI	World Vision International

Executive summary

An understanding of the capacities of people and of the agencies involved in emergency response work is critical to Oxfam's mission and its principles of emergency work. Therefore, in the light of Oxfam GB's rethinking of its involvement in emergency preparedness and response work in Vietnam, the mapping exercise of the key actors involved in emergency assistance in Vietnam as well as of the existing communication and co-operation networks was carried out to identify the potential future role of Oxfam GB. Oxfam GB is in the process of developing a long-term strategy for its involvement in emergency-related work in Vietnam and fitting it into a wider regional context. During the mapping exercise, a number of interviews were conducted with the most important international governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as with the appropriate Vietnamese governmental bodies responsible for tackling the problem of emergencies.

The key finding points out that the existing governmental framework for responding to emergencies in Vietnam has been very successful whereby the Vietnam government efficiently mobilises funds as well as through appropriate bodies promptly delivers humanitarian assistance. However, there is a need to improve exchange of information between different levels of the Vietnamese bureaucracy in order to avoid duplication of efforts and increase the effectiveness of provided assistance. It has to be stressed that information sharing, co-ordination and collaboration in delivery of humanitarian assistance have been especially weak among the Vietnamese government, international donors, UN agencies and NGOs.

The survey also shows that while the existing co-ordination between different United Nations agencies is well carried out, there is an apparent lack of a permanent forum for co-operation and exchange of information between non-governmental organisations. In the light of continuous occurring of natural disasters in Vietnam and their impact on long-term development strategies, the NGOs have been increasingly interested in getting involved directly in all aspects of emergency-related work, such as disaster preparedness, relief and rehabilitation. This tendency has been to some extent a result of the greater willingness of donors to sponsor disaster-related activities. Although the direct involvement of international NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance has been growing, this has not been paralleled with an adequate inter-agency co-ordination. This is one aspect which NGOs will have to take into account while designing their long-term strategies of involvement in emergency-related activities.

Having in mind Oxfam GB's successful involvement in emergency assistance in the recent Mekong Delta floods, and especially the assistance provided in water/sanitation- and health-related areas, it is apparent that Oxfam GB should explore avenues and its own potential to increase its involvement in delivering humanitarian assistance.

The key recommendations of this mapping exercise are that Oxfam GB while developing its long-term strategy for involvement in emergency preparedness and response work in Vietnam takes into account closer collaboration with other NGOs already working in this field by establishing a more permanent forum for discussion and exchange of expertise. Oxfam GB should also consider using the existing co-ordination mechanisms, such as DMU and DMT more effectively by resorting to the information they provided as well as contributing its own inputs. By encouraging and promoting participation and co-ordination, Oxfam GB will make its own work and the work of the other agencies more effective, better focused and targeted. In addition, Oxfam GB should collaborate more closely with PACCOM by participating in their needs assessments and evaluations.

With regards to Oxfam GB's involvement in emergency preparedness and response work, Oxfam GB should further consider increasing its response to humanitarian disasters in all areas, i.e. in preparedness, relief as well as rehabilitation fields both within and outside existing project areas. Oxfam GB should take into account the possibility of collaborating with Vietnam Red Cross directly in relief assistance and disaster preparedness even in non-programme areas. However, Oxfam GB should carefully consider the option of direct collaboration with VNRC in order not to antagonise IFRC and jeopardise its own good relationship with this organisation.

Situation analysis

1.1 Types of disasters

Viet Nam currently has a population of approximately 75 million people. Of this 75 million, approximately 90% live in rural areas, the most vulnerable to serious disasters. While Viet Nam has achieved significant growth and development in the last ten years, reaching a literacy rate of 93% and access to health care for 90% of its population,¹ natural disasters are still a significant factor in slowing development in targeted regions.

There are four major types of disasters which affect Viet Nam: floods; typhoons; droughts; and, infrequently, earthquakes. Incidence and severity of some natural disasters, particularly water related disasters seem to be increasing. The most vulnerable areas in the country are the low lying areas of the central provinces and the delta regions of the Mekong.

While disasters occur in frequency in the order they are listed, with floods as the most common and earthquakes as the least, the severity of the impact any one may have on people will be greatly affected by the level of preparedness of the people and the responding agencies, including their capacities for responding and coping. Therefore, while droughts and earthquakes are rare, the level of preparation for them is also much lower thereby increasing the potential impact of each.

There are a number of major causes exacerbating disasters in Viet Nam. These include: environmental degradation; industrialisation; urbanisation; global warming; poor watershed management; and rapid population growth². Many of the effects of these factors have been to mitigate if not render entirely useless the coping mechanisms on which people rely. Without adequate response to an emergency by people in the area, damages and losses will be much greater, compounded further by an increase in the number and severity of disasters.

1.2 Consequences for the affected people

Disasters affect people in a number of ways. The losses they encounter are not simply economic. While the monetary value of the goods and structures lost due to disasters is very high, there is also the often unquantifiable loss of productivity and livelihoods. Where risk of disaster is very high, it is hard to judge the toll this risk has had on people's lives.

While disasters are not the sole cause of increased poverty, they are a factor. This link then demonstrates the need to include disaster preparedness and mitigation in development work aimed at poverty alleviation.

Disasters also have a distinct impact on women. Women in Viet Nam are the main providers of food for their families; large and consistent losses of food supplies would burden them in attempting to fulfil this role. Additionally, acquiring loans to rebuild or relocate after a disaster is harder for women. And finally, the health effects of disasters are numerous; as primary care-givers women would be left with the additional burden of caring and providing for family members hurt or ill due to disasters.

Minority populations also suffer from disasters differently from majority populations. Minorities suffer from high levels of poverty, partly caused by high levels of isolation and low levels of education. The Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC) noted that due to isolation and lack of education many coping mechanisms readily accessible to majority groups, such as training on disaster mitigation and planting of resistant crop strains, are not accessible to minorities. The impact of a disaster on an isolated minority village is therefore much greater than the impact elsewhere, further heightened by difficulty of access to health services and relief after a disaster.

¹ UNDP. Human Development Report 1997. Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 1997. p. 38.

² Benson, Charlotte. The Economic Impact of Natural Disasters in Viet Nam. Working Paper 98, ODI, April 1997. p. 16.

2. Institutional Framework – Capacity analysis

The over-all framework of disaster-response in Vietnam is set at several levels: national (response undertaken mainly by the government and relevant government agencies), local (undertaken by Mass Organisations, under the umbrella of the Fatherland Front, and the Vietnam Red Cross VNRC), and international (undertaken by the UN agencies and by international NGOs). The usual assistance provided to disaster victims can be divided into preparedness, relief and rehabilitation.

2.1 Existing emergency response at national level

As a result of the regularity of disasters in Vietnam, a far-reaching national response capacity has developed including key players such as the government, Mass Organisations and the Red Cross (International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and VNRC). The Vietnamese national response mechanism becomes operational upon the declaration of a state of emergency by the government or the VNRC whereby national and international funds are channelled through the above-mentioned agencies. Hence, these organisations provide relief assistance using their respective local structures and networks as implementing partners. The main organs in the government structure responsible for dealing with disasters are the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSP), with its counterparts at the province, district and village levels, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) with the Department of Dyke Management and Flood Control. The government designated three agencies to take charge of receiving donations from the international community to respond to emergencies: Fatherland Front, the Vietnam Red Cross and the Aid Recipient Unit of the Finance Ministry. The government also has a very efficient and successful nation-wide fundraising capacity. It is widely noted that the Vietnamese national framework for responding to disasters has been very effective and is regarded as a well-developed institutional, political and social structure for mitigating water disasters.

Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC)³

The CCFSC is an inter-agency committee and has a standing office under the Department of Dyke Management in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). The responsibilities of the CCFSC include:

- Dyke management, including construction and monitoring;
- Forecasts and preparedness training through the Office of the Central Typhoon Committee;
- Information dissemination and preparedness training through the Office for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which includes the Disaster Management Unit (DMU); and
- Mobilisation of funds for relief and rehabilitation assistance at national and international level from national and international donors.

³ Interview with Mr Dao Trong Tu, Vice Director of International Relations Department of MARD, on 07.02.2001.

The CCFSC operates through a network of offices in every province, district and commune in Vietnam; each office follows the same inter-agency approach. The Chair of the CCFSC is appointed directly by the Prime Minister. CCFSC has its counterparts at each governmental level: provincial, district, commune and village. Provincial CFSC is under vertical management of the CCFSC and is subordinated to the provincial People's Committee (PPC). The chairperson of PPC is also the chairperson of CFSC, similarly at district and commune levels. Members of CFSC are officials assigned from sectorial departments/services such as agriculture, transportation, military, etc. The personnel changes annually.

The CCFSC collaborates with UNDP, the Asian Development Bank, the World Food Programme and a number of other organisations for joint action and funding. While the CCFSC provides some rehabilitation and relief work itself, its main functions are in communications and warning systems. Provincial CFSCs have a stronger role in disaster preparedness than in emergency response. The main tasks include:

- Designing flood and storm protection and prevention plan in conjunction with relevant authorities;
- Providing guidance to lower-level CFSCs in disaster preparedness, focusing on management of dykes, drainage system and other infrastructure facilities;
- Providing consultation to PPC;
- Implementing public education on disaster preparedness (most of the education is conducted by the VNRC);
- Gathering and processing information on disasters;
- Managing warning and preparedness systems for local population; and
- Organising evacuation and food assistance during disasters.

As far as disaster preparedness is considered, provincial CFSCs are mainly involved in maintenance and upgrading of dyke and drainage systems. The main function of CCFSC is gathering of information on the situation during disasters and feeding it into a wider inter-agency emergency response mechanism. The information provided by provincial CFSCs is passed to CCFSC and fed, in turn, into the DMU information system. Provincial CFSCs have a strong role in planning and information gathering. At lower levels, CFSCs are active agents in warning systems and dissemination of information on up-coming disasters, calling for disaster preparedness activities, stockpiling food and medicines, and organising evacuation and rescue during disasters. CCFSC is also involved in mobilisation of funds for relief and rehabilitation assistance from national and international donors. Specific ministries are responsible for implementation of projects.

The co-ordination between CCFSC and UN agencies has been seen as successful, whereas there is an evident lack of co-operation between CCFSC and NGOs. CCFSC have expressed interest in collaborating more closely with NGOs and providing them with detailed information on specific issues as well as looking into ways of extending co-operation in technical assistance.

The Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC)⁴

⁴ Interview with Dr Vo Dinh Vinh, Deputy Head of Social Work Department of Vietnamese Red Cross, on 19.02.2001.

VNRC is involved mainly in disaster preparedness and relief work. VNRC's nation-wide network covers 61 provinces and enjoys a high degree of effectiveness in delivering relief to victims of disasters. As far as disaster preparedness is concerned, VNRC provides the following services:

- Disaster preparedness centres (DP centres)– they are the focal point of VNRC's efforts in coping more effectively with disasters. VNRC operates around 40 DP centres across the country used as a base for relief operations and for income generation activities. Apart from providing relief assistance and disaster preparedness, DP centres deliver emergency care and medicines free of charge for the very poor. In addition, there are 26 emergency response stations operational in 21 disaster-prone provinces.
- Shock brigades – consist of approximately 20 to 50 members (youth over 16 years old) with extensive training in disaster preparedness who are on-call for disasters in their community. There are 4,000 Shock Brigades throughout Vietnam.
- Training in the community – According to VNRC, there are about 1,000 Red Cross staff and members trained each year in disaster preparedness, first-aid and emergency relief. They, in turn, raise awareness in the community and provide training to the population at the community level. However, the goal of greatly expanding community outreach has not been accomplished due to the insufficiency of financial and human resources.
- Disaster preparedness trainings for pupils from primary schools – the project has been so far carried out in 3 provinces. VNRC is planning to expand it into 7 more central provinces. If there is enough financial support from AusAid, which finances this project, VNRC will implement it additionally in 12 Mekong Delta provinces.
- Awareness and public education on disaster preparedness – VNRC conducts such education mostly through campaigns and posters.
- Relief warehouses – two major relief warehouses, in the North and South, hold stocks of emergency foods, mosquito nets, cloths, first aid kits and other emergency items available for rapid distribution during disasters. Each DP centre has also a small store with basic relief items.
- In terms of conducting disaster prevention projects, VNRC mainly focuses on planting mangroves along the coastal dikes, which serves as a mitigation impact for typhoons and other water disasters. Until now 16,000 ha of mangroves have been planted in 8 provinces.

With regards to emergency response, VNRC is the key organisation involved in relief, rescue, evacuation and first aid. VNRC is also involved to limited extent in rehabilitation projects, such as building flood resistant houses (in the recent Mekong Delta floods, VNRC contracted construction of 3000 such houses) and special class-rooms for students which can be use as shelter during floods. In addition, VNRC provided equipment to 3 hospital boats. Furthermore, VNRC also produces periodical reports and needs assessments for affected areas either through CFSCs or their own staff. Consequently, VNRC is responsible for raising funds among local organisations and private persons. Depending on the size of funds available, VNRC co-ordinates its work through the Fatherland Front or works directly with international organisations present in a given area. VNRC and IFRC co-operate in launching a general appeal for large amounts of funds. VNRC receives direct contributions from the government, international donors, IFRC and NGOs. Due to its local network and capacity, VNRC is seen as the organisation with the most effective structure for distributing relief assistance.

It can be argued that while VNRC has a good capacity both in disaster preparedness and emergency response, it does not have a deep structure reaching out through all the layers of the community as opposed to CFSCs, which penetrate all the levels. Although disaster preparedness centres are well equipped and shock brigades well trained in relief work, the VNRC lacks sufficient human resources, which constraints its ability to promptly reach remote communities during disasters. Many NGOs question not only the ability of VNRC to deliver and distribute relief aid on time but also the transparency of its work. In addition, they doubt the criteria used by VNRC in determining eligibility for relief assistance. VNRC, furthermore, lacks in their assessments and response a proper programmed targeting. The tendency has been to provide assistance evenly, irrespective of need, which results in failure to use the available resources efficiently. In addition, VNRC suffers from apparent lack of capacity at the headquarters level.

Relief and rehabilitation projects are implemented by local VNRC structures in collaboration with local government authorities. The monitoring, supervision and evaluation of projects is conducted by the VNRC headquarters and by independent experts contracted by VNRC.

From the VNRC perspective, the collaboration between VNRC and NGOs has been seen as good and efficient primarily because of NGOs' ability to deliver prompt support to the victims of natural disasters. In the recent floods, the support provided by Oxfam GB to VNRC by including water buckets and Cloramin-B tables in the relief item kits proved to be one of the most effective ways of ensuring adequate disinfection of drinking water at household levels. VNRC would like to see the continuation of such collaboration extended to other provinces. In addition, VNRC expressed an interest in co-operating with Oxfam GB on conducting community disaster preparedness trainings in provinces where Oxfam GB has its own long-term development projects. So far VNRC has conducted disaster preparedness training at the provincial level in 22 disaster-prone provinces. It would like to extend the training to the district level, however VNRC lacks the capacity to reach through to all the levels of the community. VNRC would appreciate support in this regard. VNRC suggested that either Oxfam GB directly co-operates with VNRC on relief and disaster preparedness or through IFRC.

*People's Aid Co-ordinating Committee (PACCOM)*⁵

The main focal point for NGOs involvement in emergency assistance is the People's Aid Co-ordinating Committee (PACCOM). During disasters and emergencies, PACCOM creates a group in charge of emergencies, which consists of one representative from each of the regional desks (Europe, North America, and Asia). The role of PACCOM in emergencies consists mainly of mobilising assistance and funds, including relief and rehabilitation from International NGOs. When a disaster occurs, PACCOM will receive information from its affiliates in the provinces, namely the External Departments of the provincial PACCOM offices. If PACCOM decides that a disaster has serious consequences, it will together with the Foreign Ministry request to the government an agreement to launch an appropriate appeal for funds to the international community. In some cases, PACCOM launches an appeal for funding itself based on the needs assessments carried out by the local PACCOMs. So far donors and international NGOs have preferred channelling money through IFRC, which delays implementation of the relief projects since the money has to go through several administrative hurdles until it finally reaches the Vietnamese Red Cross. PACCOM suggested that this system should be improved. One way would be for the NGOs to provide direct assistance to their counterparts in the provinces, who can than promptly respond to the needs of the people. Apart from disseminating information

⁵ Interview with Mr. Nguyen Van Kien, Deputy Director of PACCOM, on 13.02.2001.

through the NGO Resource Centre, during disasters PACCOM organises field visits for NGO delegations to the affected areas. Through such actions as well as launching appeals, PACCOM facilitates the involvement of NGOs in disaster response by enabling them to work directly with local counterparts. PACCOM itself is not directly involved in the implementation, monitoring or supervision of relief and rehabilitation assistance.

See annex 6.4 The Vietnamese government institutional chart.

2.2 Existing emergency response mechanism at international level – UN agencies, IFRC

Although the UN agencies have been involved in responding to disasters on regular basis, their response is mainly linked to issuing a UN appeal for funds and then channelling those funds through respective government agencies. The UN agencies are generally involved in all types of disaster mitigation, rehabilitation and relief. They work closely with the government to strengthen its capacity in responding to disasters. Among the UN agencies involved in emergency-related projects, UNICEF and UNDP play the most significant roles. Their funds assist mainly rehabilitation projects, including reconstruction of schools, agricultural systems and water systems. Some of their assistance is directed towards preparedness projects, which are implemented as part of long-term development assistance.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)⁶

UNDP focuses primarily on the development-related aspects of disaster risks and occurrences, and on providing technical assistance to institution-building in relation to all aspects of disaster management. UNDP's response to emergencies depends on the request from the Vietnamese government. The government initiates the UN appeal and UNDP co-ordinates implementation of projects which is done through CCFSC, provincial CFSCs and local authorities. UNDP's role is to monitor the implementation of projects, mainly relief (agricultural inputs, seeds, vegetables, etc.) and some rehabilitation.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)⁷

UNICEF, due to its special mandate, has a very distinctive role in emergencies in providing emergency assistance ensuring that the needs of children and mothers are met. UNICEF seeks to mobilise and provide direct relief assistance in situations where immediate needs of children and mothers are not adequately met. Where relief needs can be met by the government or other organisations, UNICEF concentrates its efforts and resources on rehabilitation and long-term child survival and development objectives. UNICEF in principle responds to emergencies, however, in practice the UN as such is asked by the government to make a UN appeal for funds to implement emergency projects. After the UN appeal is made, funds are channelled to UN agencies or donors allocate their funds directly to the respective agencies. Since 1999, UNICEF has its own preparedness plan in the regular budget, which amounts to \$100,000. This plan is for years 2001-2003 and allows UNICEF to respond to emergencies immediately without relying on the UN appeal. For the present flooding, UNICEF received \$1.3 ml from the UN appeal to implement its projects. UNICEF supports relief projects (money usually channelled through

⁶ Interview with Mrs. Tran Nguyen Anh Thu, Programme Officer at UNDP, on 06.12.2000.

⁷ Interview with Mrs. Eva Nisseus, Programme Co-ordinator at UNICEF, on 05.12.2000.

VNRC) with a focus on water/sanitation projects where UNICEF has a strong expertise. It is also involved in rehabilitation projects such as reconstruction of schools.

In terms of the implementation of projects, UNICEF, as all the other UN agencies, works in collaboration with the government and hence, does not implement any of the projects directly. The implementation is done through the government ministries and counterparts at national and local level. UNICEF assumes only a monitoring role.

World Health Organisation (WHO)⁸

WHO provides emergency relief and health assistance (medicines, medical equipment, etc) as well as promotes disaster preparedness planning, management and prevention. Usually assistance is provided on the basis of a request from the competent national authorities in emergencies, and only in the absence of such a request in situation when it is clear that such assistance would be beneficial and the situation would otherwise represent a threat to public health in the country or adjoining countries. WHO is not an implementing agency, but it works in collaboration with the government, i.e. with the Ministry of Health to reinforce and strengthen the capacity of the government to respond to emergencies. In addition to emergency assistance, WHO promotes and organises regional and country-level seminars on disaster preparedness and disaster management for government personnel and collaborates with a number of institutions engaged in the public health aspects of disasters and epidemiology.

In the most recent floods in 2000 in the Mekong Delta, WHO provided essential medicines, mosquito nets, etc. In the post-emergency phase, WHO sponsored a cholera campaign, working together with the government to ensure that an outbreak of cholera epidemic will be avoided. WHO provided \$200,000 for cholera vaccines. In addition, WHO is financing a survey and monitoring of post-emergency risk of communicable diseases carried out in the villages.

World Food Programme (WFP)

In the event of emergency, WFP provides food aid to meet emergency food needs, subject to the assessed need for international food aid. In addition, it can also:

- Provide advice and assistance to the government, other concerned agencies and local authorities in assessing possible requirements for emergency food aid, and in planning and managing appropriate food aid interventions;
- Help to mobilise and ensure co-ordination in the planning and delivery of food assistance from all sources, and any necessary logistics support and other complementary inputs.

⁸ Interview with Dr Urbani at WHO, on 08.01.2001.

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Vietnam Red Cross Society⁹

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) provides technical support, advice and finance for the Vietnam Red Cross Society (VNRC) in disaster preparedness and response.

The VNRC is one social mass organisation that has a mandate for disaster response operations in Vietnam under the Fatherland Front. It is currently not a member of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control. There is no clear permanent structure of emergency response, however, VNRC has a clearly defined role as a lead agency. The framework varies from disaster to disaster. IFRC is supporting the VNRC in redefining its role within the national framework to create a better approach to disaster response and mitigation. At the provincial level, the role of the VNRC varies from province to province, but generally the VNRC is a member of the Committee for Flood and Storm Control.

Historically international NGOs channeled funds through the Red Cross or the People's Committee. Since 1999, there has been an increasing interest among NGOs to get directly involved in implementation of emergency-related projects. IFRC believes that such interest is mainly donor-driven which pushed some long-term development NGOs to relief work. In general, IFRC is hesitant for NGOs to get involved in emergency work, although there could be some scope for it where NGOs could complement the Red Cross work. IFRC supports the implementation of projects directly through VNRC using its existing network. It is mainly involved in preparedness and relief projects with the involvement in community-level preparedness training for its own staff, with VNRC conducting it directly on the ground. The Red Cross, however, wants to change its approach and is exploring the possibility of creating a bottom-up instead of top-down approach, by focusing on training directly for households. The Red Cross wants to develop better needs assessment and vulnerability assessment at the commune level. For year 2000, the emergency budget of IFRC amounted to \$4.5 mil whereas last year it reached \$5.5 mil.

The Red Cross feels that there is a need for some level of co-ordination between the National Society and international NGOs. IFRC suggested that a meeting should be convened between all relevant parties with identification of key sectors and lead roles for specific organisations in appropriate sectors, with the Red Cross undertaking the lead role in such an activity. Such an exercise could serve to create a more permanent framework for responding to emergencies in Vietnam. In this framework, all current players would be involved, including NGOs, which work on small levels either in preparedness, relief or rehabilitation. The Red Cross can offer its network and human resources to other organisations. However, IFRC believes that the VNRC leadership role in responding to emergencies should be safeguarded. The obvious advantages of the Red Cross include: providing other organisations with knowledge, serving as a bank of knowledge with trainers and preparedness materials.

IFRC is planning to convene a meeting to which all the organisations active in the provision of humanitarian aid will be invited. The Red Cross is interested in establishing a more permanent framework for responding to disasters. It suggested that ground rules should be set beforehand in order to respond effectively during the emergency phase. Such a co-operation would avoid

⁹Interview with Dr. Ian Wilderspin, Disaster Preparedness Delegate at the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Delegation in Vietnam, on 27.11.2000.

duplication of efforts. The Red Cross is planning on convening a roundtable meeting in the beginning of 2001. The Red Cross feels that co-operation and exchange of information between organisations would be a useful way of playing off the negative impact of donors who force in projects.

2.3 Existing emergency response mechanism at NGO level

Emergency assistance provided by international NGOs themselves concentrates in all three areas: preparedness, relief and rehabilitation. Many NGOs have been regularly involved in responding to emergencies, although in most cases such response has been conducted on ad hoc basis with no specific provisions for emergencies in the long-term development budgets of the organisations. The bulk of NGOs appeal to their headquarters and the donor community for funds to respond to emergencies on a case-to-case basis. CIDSE is the only NGO which has a specific emergency fund for disaster-related response for Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

NGOs determine their involvement in disaster-related projects in two ways. If disasters affect areas where they are present implementing long-term development projects, they are able to provide direct relief/rehabilitation assistance even in cases where disasters have been minor. On the other hand, in areas where NGOs are not present, determination of response is based foremost on an appeal by the government or IFRC and information obtained from the Disaster Management Unit (DMU), IFRC, or directly from local agencies and secondly, on needs assessments conducted directly by NGOs (CARE International, Oxfam GB, CRS, SC-Alliance) or by IFRC (CIDSE). In areas where NGOs are not present they are more likely to channel funds for relief assistance through IFRC, VNRC or local agencies.

Most of the NGOs provide relief assistance indirectly by channelling funds through IFRC and using the Vietnamese Red Cross (VNRC) network for distribution. Some NGOs, such as World Vision International or Catholic Relief Services, channel relief items through VNRC and a local partner, People's Committee or Women's Union. Their local networks are used for distribution whereas NGOs themselves conduct monitoring and the implementation, supervision and monitoring. NGOs see this as an effective and efficient way of implementing relief projects. In most cases, however, cash emergency assistance is passed to IFRC by international NGOs (Oxfam IJK, Oxfam GB, etc) raised by their headquarters or received from other donors. These contributions are not tracked or monitored and there is very little control over how and where the funds are allocated. One of the very few examples of NGOs directly involved in relief assistance is CARE International, which responds to emergencies in areas where it implements its long-term development projects. CARE uses its own staff for pre-monitoring, distribution and final supervision and evaluation of project implementation.

With regards to rehabilitation projects, NGOs which undertake such activities usually implement them directly by using their own staff or in collaboration with local partners. For instance, Oxfam-Solidarite-Belgique due to its approach to development assistance provides funds directly to local partners who implement rehabilitation projects. Rehabilitation assistance is in most cases provided in areas affected by disasters where NGOs already have been present implementing their long-term development projects. In their rehabilitation projects NGOs focus on areas and issues where they have the most experience and capacity. For instance, SC-Alliance concentrates exclusively on children in providing rehabilitation assistance by reconstructing schools, providing educational assistance, etc.

World Vision International (WVI)¹⁰

For the last 10 years World Vision International (WVI) has been involved regularly in responding to emergencies with projects ranging on average between \$200,000-300,000. During the last two years, WVI has been building up its capacity to be able to provide larger assistance.

Type of projects

- WVI is involved in relief as well as rehabilitation projects. During the relief phase, WVI provides relief items, food, small fishing boats, shelter items, cleaning of wells, etc. During rehabilitation phase WVI is involved in housing rehabilitation, training and mitigation. In the recent floods, WVI was working in An Giang province providing the immediate food, fishing boats and fishing nets, seeds, fertiliser, school kits, textbooks, and housing reconstruction. In terms of rehabilitation projects, WVI is planning to implement a mitigation training which will be conducted by UNDP and IFRC. Disaster mitigation is generally integrated in long-term development projects in the fields of education, dyke upgrading, agriculture, health and micro-finance. Disaster mitigation projects include education, improvement of irrigation systems, etc. For the recent floods, WVI submitted a proposal to AUSAID for a disaster preparedness project for Quang Tri province. This project would cover aspects of education, agricultural development as well as community development. During the disaster in Central Vietnam in 1999, World Vision responded to a much lesser extent.

Implementation

- In An Giang Province, WVI implements its projects through VNRC and a local partner, the People's Committee. WVI staff is responsible for verification, distribution and monitoring. In general, WVI works through partners; it signs a contract with a supplier whereas WVI staff monitors distribution of relief items carried out through VNRC and People's Committee. WVI sees it as an effective and efficient system for delivering emergency assistance. There is one full-time national relief co-ordinator and during emergencies relief staff is taken from other projects.

Areas of involvement

- In general, WVI will get directly involved in emergency assistance in areas where the organisation is already present with its long-term development projects. In areas, where WVI is not present, it will carry out an assessment and on the basis of needs will respond to the situation accordingly.

Co-ordination

- In World Vision's view, during emergencies co-operation and co-ordination between different agencies involved in responding to disasters have been very limited. UNDMT, although it invited NGOs to participate in its meetings, is mainly limited to UN agencies. There is a need for improvement in this kind of a co-ordination framework; co-ordination should be more integrated including not only UN agencies and DMU but also international NGOs. Co-ordination should also include a discussion on projects which are implemented by respective organisations. Usually, co-ordination is done on ad hoc very informal basis. During the most recent floods in 2000, WVI co-operated informally with IFRC during emergencies as well as with Care International.

Budget for emergencies

- In the long-term community development programme there is a small provision for immediate response to emergencies. However, generally when a disaster occurs, WVI conducts an assessment and appeals firstly to the WVI regional office, from which WVI receives about \$ 15-20.000. In addition, WVI can be assisted by other WVI offices (a

¹⁰ Interview with Mr. Mark Kelly, Special Programs Director at World Vision International, on 22.11.2000.

package of assistance provided). WVI submits proposals and appeals to different donors. During the 2000 floods, in An Giang province the total emergency budget amounted to \$850,000. In 1999 in Central Vietnam, emergency assistance reached \$500,000. Over 10 years, WVI has provided \$ 4mil in total assistance.

CARE International¹¹

For the past 10 years, CARE has been involved in emergencies on a regular basis. Between 1995-98 there was a much bigger response due to the nature of disasters. In 1999 CARE's response in the central provinces was the biggest so far.

Type of projects

- CARE is involved mainly in relief and rehabilitation projects. At the moment, it is considering building up its capacity in preparedness work. As far as the current floods are concerned, CARE has been involved in 6 relief projects – each between \$50,000-250,000. In addition, there are 2 rehabilitation projects in waiting for funding (rebuilding of clinics and schools, and building of hospital boats – part of disaster preparedness). In terms of relief assistance, CARE provides vegetables, seeds, fishing boats and fishing nets, blankets, mosquito nets, water filters, collocated iron. During the rehabilitation phase, CARE is mainly involved in reconstruction work and development of boat clinics.

Implementation

- CARE implements its projects directly. It works on emergencies in the areas where the organisation has been present implementing long-term development projects. So far CARE has been using provincial distribution lists, however, it would like to focus on building up a capacity to conduct needs assessments. Right now, CARE uses its own staff to pre-monitor the situation, organises distribution itself, and conducts final supervision and evaluation of project implementation.

Budget

- CARE does not have a provision for emergencies in its budget; during emergencies it fundraises through its network to obtain sufficient funds. For 2000 the emergency budget amounted to \$750,000. At the time of the interview, there was another proposal waiting for funding from AUSAID of \$1 million for a rehabilitation project.

Existing co-operation

- According to CARE, presently, co-operation between organisations involved in responding to emergencies is done mainly on ad hoc informal basis. There is, however, a greater willingness on the part of agencies to co-operate and exchange information and expertise. In the recent disaster response, there was an informal co-operation between CARE, WVI, UNICEF and IFRC. However, co-operation was limited due to the fact that all agencies are looking at the same funding sources.

OXFAM-Hong Kong¹²

Since 1988 Oxfam-Hong Kong has been regularly involved in emergency assistance. In the last years, Oxfam-Hong Kong started building up its capacity in preparedness work as well.

¹¹ Interview with Ms. Yvonne Klynman, Programme Co-ordinator at CARE International, on 28.11.2000

¹² Interview with Ms. Thanh Ha, Emergency Officer at Oxfam-Hong Kong, on 14.02.2001

Type of projects

- Oxfam HK is mainly involved in relief assistance, such as distribution of plastic sheeting, health kits, rice and seeds (rice, peanuts, beans) and essential relief items. Sporadically, it is also involved in rehabilitation projects, including rebuilding of bridges. More recently, Oxfam HK has been involved in preparedness trainings at provincial levels working together with VNRC. Oxfam HK is planning on building its capacity in this field and extend preparedness activities to the commune level.

Implementation

- Since most of the emergencies happen in non-programme areas, Oxfam HK due to the lack of its capacity implements its projects indirectly by channelling money through IFRC or VNRC. In some cases, Oxfam HK works through its counterparts in the provinces where the organisation has been present with its long-term development programmes. During the floods in 1999, Oxfam HK channelled relief grant through JVC in Thua Thien -- Hue. Oxfam HK stressed that it is willing to channel humanitarian assistance through other NGOs if they have the capacity to respond effectively to disasters.

Budget

- Oxfam HK has a specific provision for emergencies in its budget which amounts to \$30,000. If additional funding is needed, Oxfam HK can apply to its headquarters which would provide them with grants from their budget for emergencies. The annual involvement of Oxfam HK in emergencies in Vietnam does not usually exceed funds appropriated in the annual budget.

Existing co-operation

- There has been very little co-operation between Oxfam HK and other NGOs involved in emergency assistance. If such co-operation happens it is usually on ad hoc informal basis and consists of exchange of information on the situation on the ground. Oxfam HK feels that there is a need for stronger co-operation between NGOs involved in emergency assistance as well as local bodies such as PACCOM which have access to detailed information on the situation during disasters. From Oxfam HK's perspective, PACCOM could serve as a focal point for establishing stronger co-ordination between NGOs in order to reduce duplication of emergency efforts.

Save The Children Alliance/ SCF-UK¹³

Save the Children Alliance has been involved in emergency response on regular basis for the past 5-6 years. The 1999 budget amounted to \$70,000.

Type of projects

- As far as the type of emergency projects is considered, SC Alliance usually is involved in the rehabilitation phase. In central provinces where SCF/UK is present it responds to disasters directly mainly in rehabilitation of schools. In the recent Mekong Delta flooding, SC Alliance decided to act jointly by fundraising; it is planning to get involved in a rehabilitation project by identifying the implementing Alliance member. Save The Children Fund/UK sees its greater capacity for involvement in rehabilitation projects.

Implementation

- SC Alliance channels money through one of its members who is present in the affected area. SC Alliance conducts joint assessment and evaluation. In its actions, SC Alliance specifically focuses on children and hence, does not channel money through other organisations.

¹³ Interview with Ms. Pham Thi Lan, Senior Project Officer, on 27.11.2000.

Budget

- For year 2000, SC Alliance had at its disposal a budget of \$40,000. Radda Barnen was to take the leading role in the implementation of a rehabilitation project, although all responsibilities would be shared between all the members of the SC Alliance. So far there is no specific provision in the budget for emergency operations with fundraising being done by the members of the Alliance on the basis of needs.

Existing co-operation

- So far there has not been any close co-operation with other NGOs apart from the SC Alliance members, merely some degree of informal consultation. SCF/UK sees room for greater collaboration and co-operation between other international NGOs. SCF started collaborating through Alliance.

Catholic Relief Services¹⁴

CRS has been involved in emergency work in regular manner, sometimes more than once a year, depending on disasters. CRS is trying to improve its capacity to respond to emergencies to a greater extent, however to do so, CRS would need an allocation in the budget for disasters and expansion of staff.

Types of projects

- CRS is mostly involved in relief and, to a limited extent, in rehabilitation and preparedness. CRS does not conduct rescue operations. In terms of relief, CRS provides immediate assistance such as fishing boats, fishing nets and relief items such as food assistance, mosquito nets, blankets, water filters, medicines. In a rehabilitation phase, CRS is involved in improvement of irrigation systems, reconstruction of houses and schools and improving water supplies. In terms of preparedness, CRS works on building dams systems and storages for water supplies. It also focuses on forestation projects, training and awareness for local population (focus on prevention). CRS is also thinking of getting involved in early warning systems.

Implementation

- CRS implements disaster-related projects in two ways: either directly or by working through VNRC by channelling money through them. When working through VNRC, CRS purchases relief items and distributes them through VNRC and the Women's Union or People's Committee. CRS provides assistance in all areas affected by disasters. In terms of preparedness projects, CRS implements them in areas where they have their on-going long-term development assistance.

Budget

- CRS does not have a specific provision for emergencies in its yearly budget. In the future, however, CRS is planning to have a specific provision in the budget for preparedness. During disasters CRS fundraises for emergency-related projects. In 1999, emergency assistance amounted to \$300,000, whereas in 2000 the available funds were estimated at \$130,000. Funds come from diverse sources: private donations, European CARITAS branches, US Catholic organisations and CRS headquarters.

Existing co-operation

- CRS shares information with IFRC as well as with other international NGOs which are working in the same area. CRS also exchanges information with DMU, although it has not updated its own information provided to DMU. During emergencies CRS is in contact with the Ministry of Agriculture.

¹⁴ Interview with Mr. Nguyen Van Gia, Project Manager at Catholic Relief Services, on 23.11.2000.

Cooperation Internationale pour le Developpement et la Solidarite (CIDSE)¹⁵

CIDSE has been involved in emergency projects on a regular basis either by direct implementation or through IFRC. CIDSE wants to expand its programmes in relief and rehabilitation with a major focus on post-rehabilitation work. The organisation is not at present interested in getting involved in preparedness work.

Type of projects

- At present, CIDSE is involved in two main types of projects: relief and rehabilitation. Involvement in relief assistance depends on the demand in the focal areas where CIDSE operates its long-term development projects. In terms of immediate relief, CIDSE provides rice, medical equipment, household kits, fishing nets. In terms of rehabilitation work, CIDSE contributes to rebuilding of houses, schools, bridges, conducts construction work, supports fishing villages either by grants in cash or in kind. In longer-term rehabilitation work, CIDSE works on irrigation systems and repairs of pumping stations.

Implementation

- CIDSE implements its emergency projects directly in areas where it is present and otherwise, it channels funds through IFRC. In areas where CIDSE is not present, it relies on assessments conducted by IFRC and DMU, as well as on information received from people in affected areas.

Budget

- In its programme budget, CIDSE has a provision for emergency assistance for Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. These funds are flexible; the ones not spent on one country can be used for assistance in another one. If additional funding is needed, CIDSE fundraises through headquarters and governments. The emergency fund usually amounts to \$150,000-200,000.

Existing co-operation

- CIDSE co-operates mainly with IFRC and other NGOs present in areas where CIDSE has its projects.

OXFAM-Solidarite-Belgium¹⁶

Since 1973 Oxfam SB has been involved in sponsoring relief and rehabilitation projects on a regular basis.

Type of projects

- Depending on the request of the local partners, Oxfam SB sponsors either relief or rehabilitation projects, with a focus on rehabilitation work. Oxfam SB is mainly a fundraising institution which focuses on the build-up of local partnership and capacity. In the past, projects supported by Oxfam SB included relief and rehabilitation assistance through other organisations such as VNRC and IFRC. Now, the strategy of Oxfam SB has changed and the organisation concentrates on building strong partnerships with local organisations who implement projects themselves. Support in the field of relief and rehabilitation from Oxfam

¹⁵ Interview with Mrs. Nguyen Minh Hien, Regional Co-ordinator - Central Region at CIDSE, on 24.11.2000.

¹⁶ Interview with Mr. Peter Mol, Country Representative of Oxfam-Solidarite Belgique, on 30.11.2000.

SB therefor focuses on those areas where Oxfam SB presently supports partners. In the view of Oxfam SB, relief, rehabilitation or disaster preparedness operations should be in line with and part of the development agenda of partners.

Implementation

- Oxfam SB's supports projects of local partners and involvement of Oxfam SB in implementation of relief activities is limited. For this year, Oxfam SB supports a rehabilitation project with funds from the Belgian government. In some areas there is scope for small support for emergency-related projects in co-operation with other Oxfams. Oxfam SB supports projects (not rehabilitation) in three provinces where a strong partnership with local organisations exists.

Budget

- Oxfam SB has no specified annual budget for relief and rehabilitation. Funds are sought for as soon as their are concrete needs and proposals developed in co-operation with or by partners. The proposal for rehabilitation for year 2001 amounts to \$300.000. Oxfam SB does not push partners to submit proposals; it rather waits for requests. Once proposals have been submitted, Oxfam SB fundraises through it's headquarter in Belgium with Belgium government and if possible EC.

Existing co-operation

- All the projects of Oxfam SB are implemented through local partners with the partner being the centre of the project. Oxfam SB mainly monitors implementation of the project, shares information and expertise and mobilises interests and funds. In terms of existing co-ordination with other NGOs, at the moment Oxfam SB and Oxfam HK work on a shared project (shared information and monitoring) implemented by a local partner (not related to relief/rehab). During emergencies, Oxfam SB co-operates with other INGOs present in the area on an ad hoc basis. At the provincial level, Oxfam SB co-ordinates its efforts with PACCOM.

Malteser and CISP

Apart from bigger international NGOs discussed above, there are several smaller NGOs which respond to emergencies by implementing small focused rehabilitation projects directly in the provinces where they are present. These NGOs do not have representatives in Hanoi. Among those organisations, Malteser, a German NGO, and CISP, an Italian NGO, are the most active. They receive small grants usually from the European Union for both emergency response and disaster preparedness projects. CISP is involved in health-related disaster preparedness trainings.

OXFAM-Great Britain

According to Oxfam's strategic objectives, the organisation is committed to alleviating suffering from natural disasters through both disaster preparedness and disaster response.¹⁷ Oxfam proposes to accomplish this aim through four objectives: establish a clear mechanism for disaster monitoring and response within Oxfam, including networking and co-ordination; assess and strengthen disaster preparedness and response in Oxfam's target areas; raise gender awareness in emergency work; and build infrastructure facilities crucial to disaster prevention and relief.¹⁸

In the recent years, Oxfam GB has been involved regularly in emergency-related projects implementing the above-mentioned principles.

¹⁷ Oxfam GB in Vietnam, *Strategic Plan 1995/96-1999/2000*, Hanoi, Vietnam, January 1996, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Also quoted in *Emergency Preparedness Plan*, Hanoi, Vietnam, July 1997, p. 19.

Type of projects

- Due to its capacity and expertise, Oxfam GB has been mainly involved in rehabilitation projects. As far as preparedness is concerned, there has been limited involvement of Oxfam GB in this area. In some long-term development infrastructure projects there are aspects of preparedness, however, there is lack of a comprehensive programme in this regard. Oxfam GB has not been directly involved in relief work, which is mainly carried out by IFRC and VNRC. In terms of rehabilitation work, Oxfam GB has participated in projects such as rebuilding of schools, health centres and bridges.

Implementation

- In areas, where Oxfam GB is present with long-term development projects, Oxfam GB implements projects directly or through local partners. In non-programme areas, Oxfam GB works through People's Committees and by channelling money through IFRC. So far, the biggest intervention in emergencies has been in areas where Oxfam GB is not physically present. In the recent floods in the Mekong Delta, Oxfam GB sponsored relief activities in An Giang, Dong Thap and Tien Giang provinces, which are all non-programme regions.

Budget

- There is no specific provision for emergencies in the Oxfam- GB budget. If there is a need for involvement, Oxfam GB conducts an assessment and then fundraises through the head office in Oxford or directly in Vietnam. In 1997, the total emergency assistance provided by Oxfam GB amounted to \$200,000, whereas in 2000 Oxfam GB provided \$50,000 in assistance.

Determination of involvement

- In areas where Oxfam GB is present, it responds to emergencies with small and immediate assistance, depending on needs. In non-programme areas, it responds according to the IFRC or government's appeals for assistance. In such areas, information about disasters is usually acquired initially through the mass media or directly from IFRC or other NGOs working in the target areas. Oxfam GB would usually conduct its own assessment.

Type of assistance

- Relief items are usually provided through IFRC and VNRC – household kits, blankets, plastic water buckets and Clorammin-B tablets. Rehabilitation assistance covers basic health, education, infrastructure such as rebuilding schools and health centres.

Existing co-operation

- So far there has been very limited co-operation with other INGOs and UN agencies in terms of emergency efforts. Information sharing is mainly done on ad hoc basis. The most collaboration is done with IFRC in the relief phase. There is very little co-operation with UN agencies and DMU. In 2000 floods in the Mekong Delta, there were some informal discussions with UNICEF on WatSan projects.
- According to Oxfam GB, there is a need for establishing closer co-operation between not only INGOs but also UN agencies and government organisations involved in responding to disasters. Some suggested areas for improvement in the existing inter-agency co-ordination are stated at the end of the report under *Strengthening Oxfam GB's Capacity* section.

3. Existing inter-agency co-operation in disaster response

Although disaster-response comes from all different agents, i.e. the government, local government agencies, Mass Organisations, IFRC, UN agencies, international NGOs and the donor community, there is a lack of an integrated all-encompassing framework for co-ordination. Co-ordination takes place at respective levels, with the national co-ordination level being led by the government, the UN co-ordination level coming under the aegis of UNDP including all UN agencies present in Vietnam, and the local level with the lead of Vietnamese Red Cross under the

supervision of IFRC. There is, however, very little co-ordination and exchange of information between respective levels with the exception of the UN Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) and the Disaster Management Unit, which represent a co-ordinated effort between the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC) and UNDP to gather and disseminate information and manage relief assistance and activities, mainly through the United Nations system. On the other hand, PACCOM informs international donors and make appeals to NGOs for assistance. It serves primarily to facilitate the work of NGOs; it does not implement any projects directly.

The DMT is formed in the event of a disaster affecting Vietnam. DMT is convened and chaired by the UN Resident Co-ordinator (the UNDP resident Representative) and should normally be comprised of a core group represented by the country level representatives of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, FAO and UNHCR. The DMT forum is usually open to donors, government agencies involved in responding to disasters, the World Bank and IFRC. Most recently, NGOs were invited to attend meetings of the DMT (World Vision International and Oxfam GB attended two meetings) where the government and the UN presented their assessments of the situation during the recent floods. The NGOs, however, claimed that the forum was limited to the information presented by the government and the UN, lacking a discussion of issues and possible co-ordination efforts as well as input from NGOs. The primary purpose of the DMT is to ensure that a prompt, effective, and concentrated response by the UN system is made at a country level in response to disasters. The team co-ordinates all disaster-related activities, technical advice and material assistance provided by UN agencies, as well as takes steps to avoid duplication of or competition for resources by UN agencies. The general feeling among UN agencies is that the system in place is effective and provides efficient co-ordination. Although the UN inter-agency co-ordination has been seen as a success, UN agencies also express the feeling that there is not enough co-operation between UN agencies and NGOs. All the UN agencies do not have enough knowledge on the involvement of NGOs in emergencies. The very limited co-ordination between these agencies exists mainly on informal case-to-case basis. UNDP as well as UNICEF shared the opinion that a better co-ordination network between governmental and non-governmental organisations would be needed. In addition, UNDP was interested in collaboration with NGOs in terms monitoring of projects and needs assessments. At present UNDP does not have a capacity to monitor all its projects extensively, therefore input from NGOs working in the field would be welcomed.

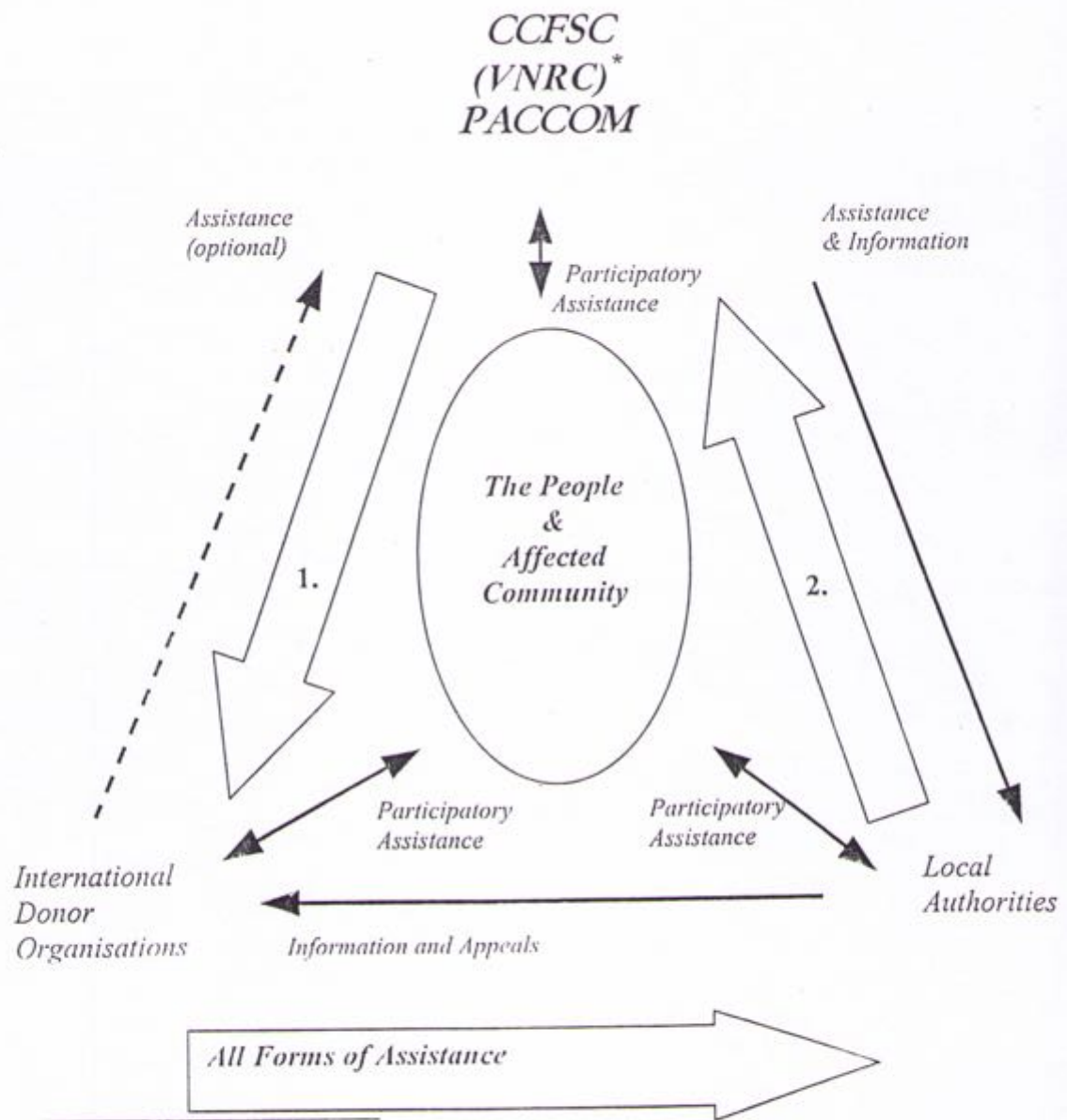
The Disaster Management Unit serves as a reference centre for information exchange and secures reliable and timely data on disasters. Its function is primarily to enhance the ability of CCFSC to respond to and better manage disasters. DMU also provides information on damage and loss resulting from disasters. Although the information provided by DMU is widely referred to by NGOs, UN agencies and the government while planning humanitarian assistance activities, more detailed and reliable information is usually obtained at the district and commune level directly by NGOs from the affected areas. NGOs express doubts about the information and needs assessments provided by local organs of CCFSC.

As far as co-ordination between different NGOs involved in emergency-response projects is concerned, at present such co-ordination is done exclusively on an ad hoc informal basis. Most of the NGOs do not know where and how others are operating, which leads to duplication of assistance and lack of a coherent strategy to respond to disasters. Information on damage and needs assessment is usually gathered and conducted separately by NGOs and exchanged in an informal manner. One of the weaknesses of NGO response to emergencies is a lack of permanent

staff dealing with disaster-related projects on regular basis. The majority of NGOs' staff responsible for emergency assistance is delegated to supervise such projects on an ad hoc basis exclusively during emergencies. This aspect weakens NGOs' potential for a coherent and long-term goal-oriented strategy for responding to emergencies.

4. Flow of information and assistance between affected people and donors

The efficiency of responding to disasters and the capacity to deliver relief assistance is dependent on an effective communication network existing between the affected areas and people, the local and central government authorities, and the international donors, including NGOs and international organisations. In Vietnam this flow of information and assistance takes place within a following framework.



Explanations:

* The VNRC could be placed at any one of the corners of the triangle since it supplies direct assistance, appeals, and information from all three levels.

1. Information & Appeals
2. Information & Appeals

When a disaster occurs, the local authorities of affected areas including local CCFSC, PACCOM, and local branches of the VNRC will inform the central level through the DMU, the VNRC preparedness centres, central PACCOM or the press of disaster situations and of the needs of the people. In some cases, when donors, such as international NGOs are present with their programmes in the affected area and have strong local partnerships, they will receive direct information from their counterparts on the development of the situation. Such NGOs might decide to conduct their own needs assessments in such cases. After collecting information VNRC will act accordingly as they deem appropriate. They have the means to mobilise funds either internally or through the IFRC making an appeal to the international donor community. On the other hand, CCFSC will disseminate the disaster-related information they receive through DMU, monitor and participate in the relief assistance. In addition, PACCOM after consulting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will make an appeal for funding to international NGOs. It will also disseminate disaster-related updates through the NGO Resource Centre. PACCOM acts mainly as a co-ordinating and intermediary body between international NGOs and local counterparts. PACCOM itself is not involved in direct implementation or monitoring of relief and rehabilitation activities.

International donors, including NGOs, have a choice of two ways of providing assistance, in the form of money, training, relief, or rehabilitation to the affected people. Either they decide to provide direct relief and rehabilitation assistance to local counterparts or they have an option of channelling money through IFRC and VNRC or CCFSC. The latter option is usually chosen by international governmental donors or by NGOs in non-programme areas, in which disasters happen and NGOs are not present. Indirect methods through VNRC or CCFSC are generally slower, a delay which can be detrimental for the victims of disasters. PACCOM therefore has especially encouraged NGOs to channel assistance directly to local authorities and counterparts in places where there is such a capacity. NGOs should be encouraged to build stronger partnerships with local PACCOMS outside of their programme areas that in case of a disaster the emergency response system is in place. Central PACCOM could act as a co-ordinator of such partnerships.

Although the existing mechanism of disseminating information and providing assistance in Vietnam attempts to disseminate knowledge quickly and efficiently and to co-ordinate the delivery of assistance in an effective manner, there are still some areas in the system where improvement of co-ordination is needed.

5. Strengthening Co-ordination Mechanisms

The main areas in which the system is lacking in effectiveness and would need improvement in co-ordination are within each level of the flow of information and assistance.

PACCOM, CCFSC and the VNRC would co-ordinate their efforts better by sharing information at the centre and capabilities at the local level. Co-ordination at this level would not only add transparency to the entire system of information flow but would also increase speed and efficiency at the central level of mobilising and disbursing assistance.

As discussed above, co-ordination between different donors is very limited and mostly done on an ad hoc basis. While the UN agencies created a formal mechanism for co-ordination during disasters, the UN Disaster Management Team, and their collaboration proves to be well integrated within the national network of emergency assistance, the NGO community has not been able to formulate a permanent mechanism for co-ordination and information exchange. As discussed earlier, many of these organisations have extensive experience in relief and rehabilitation work in Vietnam. Sharing information with each other would lead to building capacity in many areas and open up new channels for delivery relief and assistance directly to the people in need, instead of going through intermediary bodies such as VNRC or CCFSC. There is also scope for improving co-ordination in disaster preparedness work. Many NGOs are either already involved in preparedness activities, many more are looking into ways of expanding their involvement in disaster preparedness. By pulling resources together and collaborating on ways in which to include disaster preparedness into existing trainings and programme areas, NGOs could increase not only their own capacity but also the capacity of people at risk of disasters. PACCOM expressed an interest in being the focal point for such collaboration.

Co-operation between NGOs and PACCOM has been seen as successful. PACCOM sees the strength of the NGOs as their ability to act fast and promptly deliver relief and rehabilitation assistance directly to the affected areas. However, co-ordination among NGOs as well as within local structures and partners are limited. PACCOM suggested that there is a need for improvement in information sharing not only between PACCOM and NGOs, but also between the different government structures at local levels. In addition, PACCOM encouraged NGOs to work directly through PACCOM in channelling humanitarian assistance instead of going through VNRC or CCFSC, especially in areas where IFRC and VNRC capacity is limited. In non-programme areas, NGOs could build stronger partnerships with local counterparts through local PACCOM as a focal point for co-ordination of delivering humanitarian assistance.

While the flow of information and assistance system existing in Vietnam needs improvement in many areas, the emphasis should be placed on the need to take greater advantage of the already existing mechanisms. So far neither UN agencies nor NGOs are very well informed about the services and facilities provided by CCFSC, PACCOM and the VNRC, including the resources of DMU. These facilities offer the possibility of increasing the effectiveness of delivery of emergency assistance and hence, should be taken advantage of.

6. Strengthening Oxfam GB's Capacity to Respond to Emergencies – Recommendations

Considering the regularity of Oxfam GB's involvement in responding to emergencies and the unfortunate ad hoc manner of such involvement as well as given the increasing need for international NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance, Oxfam GB should explore its own capacity in emergency interventions in Vietnam and its role in a wider co-operation forum with other organisations. Taking into account the above-mentioned circumstances, it becomes obvious that it is the right moment for Oxfam GB to look into its programmatic strategy for addressing emergencies and consider greater involvement in disaster preparedness. Oxfam GB should

consider its capacity and interest in being involved in emergency-related projects not only in the provinces in which Oxfam supports development projects but also in non-programme areas. Both preparedness and rehabilitation work should be well integrated into a larger framework of long-term development work carried out by Oxfam in Vietnam. While in the process of developing a strategy for greater involvement in preparedness and disaster-response, Oxfam GB should take into account the regional approach of its involvement.

The following are basic points which should be taken into consideration while designing a new strategy for Oxfam GB's work in Vietnam:

- 1. Preparedness** – Oxfam GB should look closely at the possibility of getting involved in preparedness work. There is scope both in the health sector as well as training for local population. One of the ways would be to work directly with VNRC on conducting disaster preparedness trainings for local population in areas where Oxfam GB is present with its programmatic activities. Oxfam GB could explore the possibility of using IFRC resources (trainers, materials, and knowledge) for implementation of preparedness training. In addition, Oxfam GB could consider working more closely with Oxfam HK which is already involved in disaster preparedness training projects. Exchange of expertise and experience would be beneficial for the effectiveness of Oxfam GB's own strategy. In areas where Oxfam GB is already present but has no disaster preparedness activity, the local PACCOM and its External Relations department could serve as the key partner for co-ordination of emergency assessments and preparedness.
- 2. Establishing closer collaboration with other NGOs and international organisations involved in preparedness work** – One of the organisations which expressed an interest in co-operating closely with Oxfam GB is WHO. WHO suggested that there would be both a need and scope for both organisations to strengthen their links. So far WHO has not been working closely with any of the NGOs. By opening up new channels for co-operation, WHO and Oxfam GB would be able to exchange expertise as well as information on health-related issues and co-operate in the implementation of their health preparedness and emergency response projects. WHO suggested that Oxfam GB participate in a workshop organised by WHO in July or August 2001, which will focus on health preparedness for the up-coming floods.
In addition, Oxfam GB could also consider the possibility of co-operating closer with UNICEF. According to UNICEF, there would be quite a lot of scope for closer collaboration between Oxfam GB and UNICEF on water and sanitation rehabilitation projects. Oxfam GB could consider such co-operation.
- 3. Participating in an NGO working group** – It would be useful to strengthen co-operation between NGOs involved in emergency-related projects be it disaster preparedness, relief or rehabilitation projects. It would be a useful way of exchanging expertise, knowledge, and share information on disaster-related topics. (See the initiative undertaken by Oxfam HK).
- 4. Exploring the possibility of opening up new channels for implementation** – By strengthening NGOs existing local network and co-operating, there could be a potential for opening new avenues and channels for implementation and increased capacity of NGOs to get involved in emergency-related projects. During the meeting with PACCOM, PACCOM expressed an interest and confirmed their capacity to be involved in co-ordinating NGOs' efforts during emergencies. PACCOM encouraged NGOs to be more directly involved in implementation of relief and rehabilitation assistance by building up stronger partnerships

with local counterparts instead of channelling money through VNRC and CCFSC, which results in slowing down the delivery of humanitarian aid. In non-programme areas where disasters occur, PACCOM suggested that NGOs channel relief assistance through PACCOM which would co-ordinate distribution based on the needs of the victims in the affected areas. PACCOM has at its disposal its own network of distribution at local levels. PACCOM expressed an interest in organising a meeting with NGOs involved in emergency assistance in order to discuss better co-ordination channels between the organisations.

5. **Needs assessments** – Oxfam GB should *work together with IFRC* on improving the existing needs assessments. IFRC expressed a strong interest in such collaboration. Oxfam could also consider having a budget line for *consultant* who would be in charge of conducting needs assessments. In addition, Oxfam GB could consider participating in needs assessment trips organised by *PACCOM*, which would allow Oxfam GB to strengthen their capacity in non-programme areas. In programme areas, Oxfam GB could explore the possibility of conducting direct needs assessments together with PACCOM. PACCOM expressed its interest in such collaboration.
6. **Distribution/targeting** – In some areas where Oxfam GB has provided emergency assistance, usually channelled through IFRC and VNRC, the issue of distribution and accurate targeting has been a problem. In some cases, there have been overlaps in item distribution (the recent case in the Mekong Delta of water/sanitation items distributed through VNRC network paralleled a distribution organised by local government structures). There is a need for better co-ordination between local actors involved in providing emergency assistance: CCFSC, PACCOM, VNRC, and local counterparts of NGOs. One way of avoiding such duplications would be for Oxfam GB to work directly with local PACCOM, which would have information about other relief assistance.
7. **Regular access to information** – Oxfam GB should maintain regular links with warning systems, such as DMU services and update information on Oxfam's own activities related to emergencies on the DMU web site.
8. **Closer co-operation with VNRC in health-related assistance** – Oxfam GB should encourage VNRC to include permanently water purification in relief assistance – provision of either water buckets and Cloramin-B tablets or considering using ceramic water filters used in the most recent floods by CARE International. In addition, Oxfam GB should consider strengthening its co-operation with VNRC in emergency response delivery as VNRC continues to be Oxfam's key partner in this regard. For other areas of co-operation please see point 1 – disaster preparedness.
9. **Relations with donors** – Oxfam GB should look into developing a stronger relationship with the EU Delegation and use ECHO funding for both disaster preparedness and relief activities. ECHO expressed its interest¹⁹ in working closely with Oxfam GB both in preparedness and rehabilitation projects.
10. **Local capacity of Oxfam's partners** - Oxfam GB should closely research and examine the capacity and ability of its local partners in programme areas to be more involved in both relief and preparedness work.

¹⁹ Meeting with Michele Nori, Development Cooperation Advisor ECHO at the EU Delegation, 04.12.2000.

11. **Co-operation with Oxfam-Hong Kong** – More active involvement in emergency-related projects would require Oxfam GB to expand its human capacity by hiring a full-time person responsible for those projects. If at present moment Oxfam GB does not have such capacity, it could consider closer collaboration with Oxfam-Hong Kong, for instance by sharing a person who would be in charge of emergency-related activities.

12. **Setting up an effective avenue for exchange of information** – In addition to regular checks of the updates provided by PACCOM and DMU on the emergency situation during disasters. PACCOM passes its information to NGO Resource Centre, NGOs could consider setting up an alternative information exchange mechanism, for instance a web-site which would provide updates on disaster situations, venue for information sharing for NGOs and international organisations and the Vietnamese government agencies. Alternatively, exploring the interest in and the possibility of setting up an information focal point, a web site or an e-mail letter, which would provide up-dated information on NGOs activities in the field of emergencies during the actual disasters (including preparedness work).

Appendix 6.1 – List of Interviewees

- **UNDP**
Mrs. Tran Nguyen Anh Thu, Programme Officer at UNDP
- **UNICEF**
Mrs. Eva Nisseus, Programme Co-ordinator at UNICEF
- **WIIO**
Dr Urbani
- **IFRC**
Mr. Ian Wilderspin, Disaster Preparedness Delegate
- **World Vision International**
Mr. Mark Kelly, Special Programs Director
- **CARE International**
Ms. Yvonne Klynman, Programme Co-ordinator
- **Save The Children Fund - UK**
Ms. Pham Thi Lan, Senior Project Officer
- **Catholic Relief Services**
Mr. Nguyen Van Gia, Project Manager
- **Oxfam-Hong Kong**
Ms. Thanh Ha, Project Officer
- **Oxfam-Solidarite Belgium**
Mr. Peter Mol, Country Representative
- **CIDSE**
Ms. Nguyen Minh Hien, Regional Coordinator – Central Region
- **PACCOM**
Mr. Nguyen Van Kien, Deputy Director, PACCOM
- **MARD**
Mr. Dao Trong Tu, Vice-Director of International Relations Department of MARD, member of CCFSC
- **Vietnam Red Cross**
Dr Vo Dinh Vinh, Deputy Director of Social Work Department, Vietnam Red Cross

Appendix 6.2– List of sources

Documents Reviewed

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, International Financing Agencies, Multilateral and Bilateral Donors, and Non-governmental Organisations, Multi-Donor Mission Report – Central Province Initiative – Partnership to mitigate natural Disasters in Central Vietnam, Vietnam, September 22, 2000.

Oxfam-Great Britain, Mekong Delta Flood Response Public Health Assessment and Programme Review, Hanoi, December 2000.

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Oxfam-United Kingdom and Ireland, Emergency Preparedness Plan, Vietnam, July 1997.

Save The Children fund/UK, Report on Emergency Collaboration in Vietnam, Vietnam, November, 2000.

UNDP, Human Development Report 2000, Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 2000.

UNDP, United Nations Disaster Management Unit/Project, Vietnam, 1994.

United Nations Disaster Management Unit, Web-site updates, Several, 2000.

Appendix 6.3 - Terms of Reference

Draft ToR

Background

Oxfam GB in Vietnam is in the process of developing a long-term strategy for its work in emergency preparedness and response in Vietnam, and fitting its work to wider regional plan.

Objectives

- Update information on emergency coordination and network within donor community (including NGOs) and between donors and government organisations
- Use updated information to feed into wider strategy paper for OGB's future work in emergency preparedness and response in Vietnam

Outcome

- An updated mapping report on emergency co-ordination framework in Vietnam

Key responsibilities

- Review existing documents including OGB's 97's preparedness plan, draft SCO 3 (strategic change objective) and others
- Collect related information
- Making appointments (with help from admin staff)
- Conduct interviews with key donors, NGOs and government organisations
- Write up mapping exercise

Location

Hanoi

Time frame

2 weeks (approx), start as soon as possible.

Appendix 6.4 – The Vietnamese Government Institutional Chart

