

IN FOCUS

# Impact Orientation in Humanitarian Aid

From Concept to Practical Implementation



Caritas Germany  
International Department



## **Imprint**

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Postfach 420; 79004 Freiburg, Tel.: ++49 (0)761 200-288; Fax: ++49 (0)761 200-730

**E-Mail:** [contact@caritas-international.de](mailto:contact@caritas-international.de)

**Website:** [www.caritas-international.de](http://www.caritas-international.de)

**Editors:** Michael Brücker, Volker Gerdesmeier (responsible), Andrea Edler

**Final Editing:** Ingrid Jehne

**Cover picture:** Reconstruction in Daikundi, Afghanistan. Photo by Patrick Kuebart

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## FOREWORD

More than 65 million people – as many as never before – are fleeing these days. Violent conflicts, brutal persecution and natural disasters have displaced more children, women and men from their homes than ever before. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the number of refugees has quadruplicated in over ten years.

How can this humanitarian need be met, coordinated and financed? More than 9.000 participants from 173 states were discussing this questions at the first World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016. In the focus of the discussions was, as a matter of fact, the issue of quality of aid services.



It is the aim of all humanitarian and developmental non-governmental organizations to achieve the largest possible impact with limited means. But how can we assure ourselves, our work, but also our donors, that our work will result in the desired effects and avoid undesirable side effects. All the more if a major part of the aid is being rendered in a complicated context: in conflict stricken areas with various violence-prone parties, local authorities and hardly any access to independent information. How can we be sure that money will not be misappropriated or certain target groups will be favoured? Or that the supply of relief items after a natural disaster will not have a negative influence on the regional markets?

While it is comparably easy to give account of the number of distributed food items or medical drugs, it is more of a challenge to measure the overall impact beyond that. If, however, the transition from mainly reactive to a sustainably effective humanitarian aid shall succeed, we have to learn more about the long-term impacts of our measures on the people.



What is the impact of our aid?

We are convinced that the impact of our work cannot be monitored at our office desks at home, but that this must happen on-site together with the people affected and involved. For Caritas Germany, therefore, impact orientation always implies to lead a close dialogue with our partners: In the end, the continuous monitoring of the work we jointly perform and scrutinizing of what could be specifically improved is at issue.

The present report gives, on the basis of ten examples, insight into the ways how Caritas German has put the “Concept on Impact Orientation” into practice, since it was developed together with the organization of “Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe” five years ago. Thus, we would like to incite discussions on suitable methods and ways of impact orientation and hope to contribute to enhanced impact orientation in humanitarian aid.

Kind regards

*Dr. Oliver Müller*  
Director of the International Department of Caritas Germany

*Volker Gerdesmeier*  
Director of Quality Management & Controlling





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# **Introduction:** **Impact Orientation in Humanitarian Aid – From Concept to Practical Implementation**

*By Volker Gerdesmeier*



»Indeed, the Somali emergency might be said to represent the coming together of two great oral cultures: the one Somali and the other humanitarian. Such an encounter is bound to present problems for the conventional evaluator.«

*(Hugo Slim in Disasters, Vol. 20, No. 4, 12/1996, page 359)*



Humanitarian organizations like Caritas Germany and their local partners have always monitored the impacts of their joint projects and, as a result, drawn conclusions for their future work. But five years ago Caritas Germany and the organization of “Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe” decided jointly to systematize the issue of impact monitoring and explore it more in depth.

### Three reasons were crucial

- First of all, more and more the impression was gained that the concrete work of our local partners is not sufficiently documented. Their decisions and ways of acting in acute humanitarian crises are based on decade-long experiences in emergency cases and on social skilled work as well as on a deep understanding of the social and cultural environment. However, this background knowledge is too little disclosed, documented and shared with other, less experienced, partner organizations and with us. Project reports and evaluations are far too much confined to describe measures taken in a kind of target-actual logic. Considering the limited basis of decision-making, the question why and how decisions were made in a crisis – in view of big dilemmas and target conflicts we are facing all the time in humanitarian aid – was not raised sufficiently. This fact deprived other partners as well as us of an important opportunity to gain learnings. Therefore, far too often we discussed in acute crises important key issues as if we were facing them for the very first time.
- Vice versa, the dialogues with our partners led to the observation that, especially as a result of the long-term experience, too often the effects of measures carried out were expected, but it was not monitored systematically enough if they had really been achieved. Seeds were distributed, trainings were held. However, harvesting time was already after the end of the project. Instead of going back and making queries if the expected rise in quantities had taken place, our partners were already busy with other urgent projects in other sub-regions. In this case we wasted the opportunity to test various project approaches by comparison.
- Finally we noticed that the necessary discussions on basic principles, policies and quality standards got increasingly specialized due to outward pressure and moved away from concrete project work. True, a guideline for further action and a code of conduct, signed as binding by Caritas Internationalis, was available in the form of the “Code of Conduct” which had been written in 1994 due to traumatic

experiences of aid organizations, such as realizing their limitations and dilemmas in Eastern Congo in light of the refugee crisis after the genocide in Rwanda. But far too often it was just assumed, without any systematic monitoring, that the ambitious goals had been reached in practical work. Whereas, on the other hand, this was denied by critics of humanitarian aid, although also out of hand and without any empirical basis.

In our view and according to our experience, these identified needs for improvement are typical for the sector of worldwide humanitarian aid and probably also for the field of development coordination. We are of the opinion that we, as many other organizations, can be proud of the decade-long aid, sometimes rendered under extremely difficult circumstances. But we are also convinced that the call for more accurate accounting of the achieved results, which was raised more and more during the recent years, is absolutely justified. We appreciate the progress in the development of objectively verifiable quality standards made in recent years, but we also observe with concern that the multiplication of policies, standards and cross-cutting issues, which the humanitarian sector has experienced in the last decades, is leading to disengage the discourses from project reality. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for us to turn the debate on its head and to analyze, based on examples of concrete projects and together with our partners, the impact of our aid.

In a joint process with “Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe” we are developing a concept for improved impact monitoring within humanitarian aid.<sup>1</sup> We dealt thoroughly with the very good concepts of the organizations of “Misereor” and “Welthungerhilfe” and with the project “NGO-Ideas”, which is accompanied by the Venro Working Group “Impact”. But we felt that a specific approach for humanitarian aid was missing. Here it was absolutely worthwhile to deal with approaches of Anglophone areas like e.g. those of Chris Roche, the Feinstein Centre or ALNAP. But also the work of URD in the Francophone area was very inspiring to us.

### The Focus of our Concept

It is an essential component of our concept to differentiate between areas of support and to adapt the scope and direction of the impact monitoring study to the areas of support analysed. In long-term collaboration, in disaster preparedness or in the field of skilled social work it is possible to



### Phases and Support Processes of International Collaboration

	Emergency Relief	Rehabilitation	Development Cooperation	Disaster Preparedness Prevention
<b>Cause</b>	Acute emergency	Destroyed infrastructure	Structural instability	Increased vulnerability, risk areas
<b>Goals of our support</b>	Assure survival	Restoring of livelihood	Accompany sustainable development processes	Sustainable reduction of risks which threaten life and livelihoods
<b>Time framework</b>	Short-term	Mid-term	Long-term	Mid-term to long-term
<b>Activities</b>	Basic supply with drinking water and food Temporary shelter Medical support Support refugees	Reintegration measures Reconstruction Support capacities of self-supply	Consultancy and further trainings Micro credits	Building and strengthening of capacities to realize, judge and assess risks; Strengthening of local structures to cope with crises

Impact monitoring has to be adapted to the area of support. The graph is taken from: *Fachkonzept Wirkungsorientierung in der Humanitären Hilfe*, by Caritas Germany and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, 2013

analyse the initial state thoroughly, in order to document any subsequent changes and analyse how they are related to the activities within the project.

Utmost ambitious goals like invigorated resilience of communities shall be operationalized and their implementation shall be concretely tackled. And this should be done not at the end of the project, but at a point of time when some effect is visible or when the moment of truth – for instance the next major disaster – has come.

Conversely, such an extensive before/after comparison is not feasible in acute emergency projects, neither objectively nor ethically. Here, time is short and there is a need for swift action on the basis of a need assessment. Therefore, impacts shall be estimated in the course of the project (for instance, by so called real-time evaluations) wherever possible in order to identify factors which had not been considered before and to take countermeasures. Moreover, final evaluations shall be applied to monitor, in retrospect, whether the legal standards have been met, and to draw conclusions for further projects.

Another concern of our concept is the search for a middle path between qualitative and partly even anecdotal impact monitoring on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the claim for virtually experimental research designs. We don't want to create expert knowledge but enable a better reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the respective project for our partners and – as far as possible – the people affected.

We are aware of the fact that each evaluation is quite subjective. By supervised self-evaluation we intend not just to control the impact of our work but create, together with our partners, space where they can take a critical and methodical look at their own activities. Therein we deliberately follow the approach "See-judge- act" in the Church's social teaching. External evaluations can very well build upon a "culture of learning" like this.

Finally, it appears important to us not to enforce our call for in-depth impact monitoring area-wide. First of all, the implicit risk of falling flat appears to be quite large. Secondly, we are of the opinion that the arising costs should remain in a reasonable proportion to the actual project work.

Specifically we are targeting to evaluate ten percent of our projects which have a volume of more than 100.000 Euro. In addition to this we are carrying out cross-thematic cross-section evaluations regularly. On the basis of these exemplary cases, which were chosen according to some specific criteria (e.g. risk factors, innovative approaches), we strive for pursuing the complex issues with respect to their effects and interactions between projects and their respective context. This intensive way of impact monitoring shall pave the way to sufficiently profound impact monitoring.

1 Caritas international, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (2013): *Fachkonzept zur Wirkungsorientierung in der Humanitären Hilfe*. Menschen in Not besser beistehen. [www.caritas-international.de](http://www.caritas-international.de)

## Moving from the Concept to Implementation

On the basis of our concept, we have, together with our partners, observed and analysed the impact of our project work in humanitarian aid for three years. The direct costs for that are less than two percent of the expenses arising for evaluated projects and less than 0.2 percent of the expenses for the complete projects. In doing so we experiment with various approaches like local and/or international reviewers, preliminary studies, final evaluations, long-term and cross-section evaluations or a combination of evaluation and trainings in the field of monitoring and evaluation. In meetings held for the purpose of sharing learnings and of exchanging views, we strive for communitizing the experiences gained with partners and staff members.

Today, about three years later, we would like to take a first interim review with this publication if and how we have moved from the concept to implementation. For this purpose, ten examples are introduced here which illustrate how we tried to survey the impacts and achievement of goals.

Two principal articles are destined for the classification into the wider context of the recent years. Dennis Dijkzeul, Professor of Organization and Conflict Research Sociology at the Ruhr University in the city of Bochum, describes the development of intelligence-led approaches in the last decades. He refers to “still buried treasures” like e.g. the potential of stronger collaboration of science and practice or in-depth studies on the basis of long on-site presence and of the application of participatory techniques.

Aloysius John, in charge of “Institutional Development Strengthening and Capacity Development” in the umbrella association of our worldwide network, Caritas Internationalis, and lecturer for humanitarian aid, describes examples of successful impact monitoring of members from the South and builds a bridge between organizational development and the newly developed management-standards of Caritas Internationalis.



## Outlook

We feel it is of utmost importance to exchange views with other players of good will about reasonable ways of impact monitoring which, thus, should lead to improved impact orientation. The collection of concrete examples presented here wants to provide an impetus.

### We find the following examples of our practical experience useful:

- Project partners are basically very open and interested when it comes to closer and more systematic consideration of the impact of their work.
- The achievement of goals and impacts from ostensibly simple sectoral projects like WASH or food security turns out to be rather complex when it goes into detail. Obviously it remains to be difficult to put methods, which are actually quite well-known, into practice.
- It is possible to “measure” impacts, make “reliable” statements when the population is involved and when quantitative and qualitative methods are combined in a reasonable way. Ethically, it is quite feasible to work with controlling groups when they receive information beforehand and when they are asked for permission.
- Qualitative approaches can be totally justified and, potentially, the means of choice, as the example of the evaluation of the youth project in Liberia proves. Especially attitudes and behavioural patterns in a conflict context, which are difficult to understand, can perhaps be surveyed much better.
- Horizontal issues like community-development, strengthening of partners or the compliance with humanitarian principles can be evaluated when they are operationalized and properly methodically analysed. The example of specific surveys of members of all religious groups and non-beneficiaries on the services of the project, as it is the case in the example of the Democratic Republic of Congo, can well be repeated elsewhere.
- Evaluations can be carried out successfully even years after the end of a project and deliver precise information on emergency services rendered. A long-term perspective is especially well suited to record impacts. A before/after comparison based on a baseline is not absolutely necessary.
- Critical occurrences in the cross-section evaluation Balkans/Middle America/Indonesia as well as in the Liberia evaluation indicate that personal contribution does not automatically lead to “ownership” and, vice versa, under certain circumstances can even exclude vulnerable parts of the population.

It remains a challenge to persevere the ambitious goal of increased impact monitoring in everyday work. Colleagues are far too often driven by concerns about the need on-site and the reporting obligations to funders and don't have sufficient time left to organize impact analyses. Overly short lead-times of some funders and correspondingly planning insecurity hamper participatory planning and the specification of reasonable indicators together with the target groups. We think there is a strong analogy here with the logical-framework-approach which once started as a comprehensive analysis and planning approach and which today often is occasionally applied as a sort of skeleton version of a table list “for the funder”.

The adoption of the “Core Humanitarian Standards” is a great opportunity to improve the quality of humanitarian aid for people in need worldwide. We appreciate the concrete operationalization of these far-reaching goals twenty years after the pioneering Code of Conduct, which unfortunately remained abstract for many. NGOs and funders have to monitor the compliance with these goals by methodically appropriate evaluations of work. Regarding the question which method is appropriate, we follow the recommendation of Imme Scholz<sup>2</sup> on “Sustainable Development Goals”: to “observe things that count but can't be counted.” Impact monitoring of humanitarian aid will remain an “imperfect offering” (James Orbinski). Together with our partners we are proud that we took the first concrete steps. There is still much left to do, with the methods available we could only touch on many questions, such as the impacts of long-term project work in the context of conflicts. They require in-depth studies and long-term observation together with our partners, just as Dijkzeul and other experts claim in the following chapters.

<sup>2</sup> Scholz, I. In: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (2015): Translating an Ambitious Vision into Global Transformation. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, p. 8



# Evidence-based Action in Humanitarian Crises<sup>1</sup>

By Dennis Dijkzeul, Dorothea Hilhorst, Peter Walker and Volker Gerdesmeier

## Background

During the Crimean War of 1853–56, Florence Nightingale struggled to improve the conditions in a military hospital in Scutari, close to Istanbul, Turkey. She was seeking to reduce the high mortality rates of wounded soldiers being treated there. In a report after the war she described that the majority of soldiers in the Crimean War died not of war wounds but of preventable diseases such as cholera. Her finding was based on epidemiological statistics. Thus, she became a pioneer in evidence-based practice. Florence Nightingale emphasised hygiene and advocated sanitary living conditions for the rest of her life.

This example shows how evidence-based practice can be used: After identifying a severe problem, and methodically collecting and analysing relevant data, a clear conclusion is drawn, and a course for action is proven and implemented. Calls for more evidence-based practice in humanitarian aid (as well as in development cooperation, see e.g. Duflo/Banerjee “Poor economics”) have grown constantly in recent years. This is an expression of the hope to reduce suffering and to gain transferable know-how by a more accurate recording of the impact of our interventions, by knowing what works and why. However, the generation, and particularly the application, of evidence are not always as simple as it may appear.

## The spreading of evidence-based approaches

Research on humanitarian crises and the use of evidence in humanitarian action has been problematic (Darcy et al., 2013). A culture of ‘we need immediate action’ has contributed to a certain acceptance of ‘quick and dirty’ data-gathering to underpin needs analysis, implementation, and evaluation

(Levine and Chastre, 2004, pp. 19–20; Garfield, 2011). Moreover, the humanitarian domain often is normative and agencies derive their legitimacy and credibility by making reference to their principles rather than to their evidence-based approaches. Systematic programme evaluation was not common in humanitarian action until the 1990s, partly because it was not considered appropriate to raise questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of life-saving action. A development towards enhanced evaluation and, thus, evidence-based action has been observed over the last two decades and has also influenced humanitarian aid.

Especially since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the massive insecurity among the humanitarian community – co-triggered by the ground-breaking “Rwanda-Evaluation” (Danish International Development Assistance, 1997) which was launched by several funders – the humanitarian sector experienced a (incomplete) trend towards professionalisation. Common standards and indicators as, for example, the Sphere Handbook, were being developed. Trainings were carried out and more attention was drawn on evaluation and accountability of humanitarian aid, with the “Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance” (ALNAP) playing a vital part. Numerous handbooks, guidelines and other tools for improvement – or, at least, for verbalization – of humanitarian action were elaborated, which are constantly complemented by new tools.<sup>2</sup>

In all these cases insights gained on the basis of systematic evaluations played a role. Humanitarian data acquisition and analyses have multiplied. We are, however, faced with the challenge of selecting the most relevant tools, to estimate their methodological quality and, most of all, to ensure their correct application in decision-making, implementation and evaluation (Mock and Garfield, 2007).





## Comparative studies require reliable gathering of data

In medicine, nutritional science and public health randomised control trials (RCTs) are predominant. They can provide a probability statement on the extent to which a researcher's intervention works by comparing the randomly-assigned intervention and control groups. This comparative set-up overcomes the problem of the often-absent counterfactual: what would have happened without intervention? For example, Collins (2001, pp. 498–501) argued in *The Lancet* in 2001 that therapeutic feeding centres were ineffective in addressing malnutrition in populations dispersed across large geographic areas. Instead, he suggested that community-based management of malnutrition, using ready-to-use therapeutic foods, could considerably reduce malnutrition, increase coverage, help families to continue with their daily work, and lower the costs of humanitarian action. He based his assessment partly on the outcomes of RCTs by other scholars and continued such research. His evidence sparked further research, eventually winning the support of key players involved in tackling malnutrition to widely adopt this innovative approach.

Yet, the humanitarian field is similar to that of public health in that causal chains linking interventions with their outcomes can be (or become) long and complex, with many local and international actors, as well as contextual factors, playing a role. In these cases, only plausibility statements will be possible, derived from evaluations that, waive randomized elements like the selection of respondents by random sampling, but nevertheless make use of comparative observational designs with control groups (comparative, experimental and/or theory-based approaches). Such evaluations can help to rule out whether variables other than the intervention influence outcomes. Furthermore, they may supply information on the logical sequence of intermediary steps between the intervention and its outcome(s).

## Widening the horizon: Theories of change and the significance of context

The main challenge is to move beyond taking stock of inputs and outputs, and to measure outcomes and impacts. Both the comparative and experimental approaches described above, as well as the more theory-based approaches, can play important, complementary roles in this respect.

Theory-based approaches are rather of a qualitative dimension, they include 'theories of change, causal modeling, outcome mapping, most significant change etc. They hypothesize that "in complex contexts often the most that can be done is to demonstrate through reasoned argument that a given input leads logically toward a given change, even if this cannot be proved statistically" (Proudlock and Ramalingam, 2009, p. 29). Then, within the framework of good project-monitoring, indices can be gathered to prove if the theory of change intended by the respective project works or not. Humanitarian programmes have but a limited influence on humanitarian crises. Therefore, it is crucial to take the context into consideration. Neither comparative approaches with their risk of oversimplification nor the application of theory-based approaches, practised up to now, took sufficient account of that.

Taking the wider context into account puts a premium on "meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders in defining the purpose and scope of impact assessments" (Proudlock and Ramalingam, 2009, p. 14). Such a participatory approach may also reveal the conflicting aims and values of the manifold actors involved in, or affected by, humanitarian programmes. As a result, such participation can be both a managerial necessity and a politically sensitive issue. Hence, participation in an impact assessment almost automatically reveals the limit of a technocratic approach (fixed goals set by an intervening organisation with a focus on instruments/techniques and the concomitant outputs and outcomes). It raises the question of whose objectives, outcomes, or needs are valued most.

As a result, more open and participatory methods of generating evidence, in particular qualitative ones - for example, narrative approaches, such as thick description - to understand interventions in their broad economic, political, and social contexts can help to inform such fraught issues as diversion of aid, its contribution to the political economy of conflict, and hidden aspects of power (not least the powerful positions of the humanitarian organizations themselves). Studying these issues

1 This article is an abbreviated and revised version of the report of Dijkzeul, Hilhorst and Walker in "Introduction: evidence-based action in humanitarian crises", in "Disasters 2013, 37 (S1), pages 1-19.  
2 For an overview of these tools see also Mock and Garfield, 2007; OCHA, 2007; Bratt 2009; Maxwell, Parker and Stobaugh, 2013; Dijkzeul, Hilhorst, Walker, 2013).

typically requires a long field presence, working with local partners and using participatory techniques (Haar, Heijmans, and Hillhorst, 2013, p.37).

Humanitarian organisations may not always be aware of the different ways in which their goals work out in practice or how they are being perceived and criticized locally (Dijkzeul and Wakenge, 2010). When such goals are taken for granted, humanitarian action becomes a technocratic exercise that may mask political aspects, such as, for instance, its effects on political change. Max Weber pointed out that the technocratic model makes discussion about aims impossible. He saw it as a one-sided rationality: a goal-rationality that focuses exclusively on efficiency and planning. Value-rationality that takes into account why specific goals are set is then being neglected. Such goal rationality can reinforce traditional approaches and block new ones.

Generally, humanitarian crises still require more sound theory to inform both research and practice. The more common practical bent in humanitarian action means that theoretical underpinnings of studies often are neglected or ignored. But where are studies of how markets work in crises based on solid economic theories? Sound theory can facilitate the search for and the establishment of evidence.

## Combining methods and generating evidence

In the final analysis, it is important to understand both the intervention of a humanitarian organization and the crisis context, because they interact. It is possible to apply a range of evidence-seeking methods to gather and analyse data. Instead of seeing comparative approaches, in particular RCT, in opposition to more qualitative, narrative approaches in particular RCT, in opposition to more qualitative, narrative approaches, it is more useful to view them as a (partly overlapping) range of methods and disciplinary approaches. In all cases the method chosen should meet three criteria: It should, firstly, have relevance in relation to a given assertion, secondly show sufficiency, in the sense of corroboration with other methods, and, thirdly, evince veracity, meaning that the process of gathering and analysing data has been free from distortion and as far as possible uncontaminated by vested interests (Leeuw et al., 2012, p. 2).

## Summary and outlook

Humanitarian quality standards like the Sphere Standards would not have been possible without previous empirical research. Conversely, enhanced efforts have to be made to


make the application of humanitarian standards verifiable in practice. For this purpose, we have to get away from much too informal, descriptive and anecdotal approaches. We need more formal, more rigorous, methodologically-based, more analytical and more transparent approaches to gain and to apply evidence for humanitarian aid in violent conflicts and natural disasters.

The potential of increased collaboration of research and practice is very high; currently it is practised only insufficiently. The gap, mentioned by Caritas Germany in the introduction, between research and policy on the one hand and established practice on the other hand is an existing problem. Practitioners keep counting on experience. They constantly and sceptically witness the debate on impact, and accuse, from time to time, consultants and academic circles of pushing the issue only out of self-interest. Conversely, experts are, due to their comprehensive knowledge of methods, at risk of classifying tangible practice of impact monitoring as unprofessional and of demanding more than is feasible. Long-term partnership initiatives could help to overcome these stereotypes and defensive attitudes.

The most important players to cope with humanitarian crises are the people affected and local organizations. The advancement of the quality of humanitarian aid can only be accomplished with and (to some extent) by them. Local organizations have to get access to and benefit from professionalisation. Justified calls for methodological improvement are not to lead to hegemonic knowledge between organizations of the north. Organizations of the north should support organizations of the south in analyses (investing in evidence is expensive). Moreover, they should make use of the possibilities of evidence-based analysis in order to question their own work and not blow their own trumpet prematurely. The multiplication of players has led to a strong competition over the last decades, hampering the acknowledgement of goals not reached and the subsequent dialogue. Too many cross-cutting issues are being dealt with only on rhetorically, but their implementation on the ground is not even rudimentarily monitored.

Funders have also a large responsibility in promoting the development toward systematic impact orientation, which has taken place in recent years, and in preventing technocratic aberrations. Much too often they are sending contradictory messages by calling for more verifiable context-orientation and participation within the programmes (presupposing flexible modalities of implementation) on the one hand, and formalizing the target-actual-control of previously specified programme objectives on the other hand.

## Different types of research problems, different methods

Type of Causal Chain	Context	Type of humanitarian activity	Methods	Examples of decisions or tasks executed	Affinity with disciplinary approaches
 Short and tight causal chains	Nearly identical contexts with beneficiaries with common characteristics	Standardised intervention	Quantitative, RCTS and quasi-experimental	Using evidence on earlier clinical interventions, efficacy and replication of medical treatments, such as in a needs assessment for priority setting and triage	Biology, medicine, nutrition, war surgery
	Similar contexts with diverse beneficiaries	Standardised intervention	Experimental, comparative, theory-based, mixed quantitative and qualitative methods	Appraisal for project design, feasibility, milestones and costing; evaluation of similar projects	Logistics, public health
	Diverse contexts with diverse beneficiaries	Customised interventions and/or focus on understanding (parts of the) crisis context	Iterative experiments, more theory-based, qualitative, and narrative methods	Operations research; comparing (large) programmes	Anthropology, development economics, international relations, logistics, organisational sociology, public health
	Broad context, diverse beneficiaries and/or other groups and/or organisations and/or states (complex setting)	Focus on understanding the crisis context(s)	More theory-based, qualitative, and narrative methods	Monitoring for management decision-making; organisational evaluation; evaluation of national programmes; studies of international civilian or military interventions and the political economy of war; long-term political consequences	Anthropology, international relations, organisational sociology
Long, adaptive, complex causal chains					

adapted from Stern (2008), Proudlock and Ramalingam (2009, p. 32), and authors' own research.

We regard the adoption of the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), complementary to the still valid Sphere Standards, as a big opportunity to improve the quality of humanitarian aid for people in need worldwide, because it focuses on the target group of the aid to render and tries to offer respective methods. The critical debate on voluntary commitment versus external verification and certification is justified and necessary (see for instance Geoffrey et al. 2015). The issue which evidence-based techniques should be implemented and how, in order to be able to monitor the compliance with standards comprehensively, should be a matter of priority. Worries of an “excessive standardization of methods, techniques and indicators at the expense of the issue” (Loiacano in Geoffrey 2015) should be taken serious to make this new initiative for binding quality standards a living document.

It's not easy to improve humanitarian aid. Better evidence increases the degree of evidence-based action and its impact, and can thus provide an important contribution to understand the impact of humanitarian aid much better and refine and optimize it subsequently.

- Dennis Dijkzeul Professor of Conflict and Organization Research at the Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV) Ruhr University Bochum
- Dorothea Hilhorst Professor of Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, The Netherlands
- Peter Walker, Dean of the Falk School of Sustainability, Chatham University, Pittsburgh, USA
- Volker Gerdesmeier, Director of Quality Management, Caritas Germany



# Developing a **Culture of Impact** among Aid Organizations

Over the last decades aid organizations have come under pressure to prove their added value. International aid is no longer being perceived as some simple welfare activity out of goodwill; the “efficiency” of aid has become a keyword. The Caritas network is not exempt from this trend. Systematic evaluations, close monitoring and many other elements have become obligatory to many of us. The importance attached to the outcomes of our activities represents another vital dimension which has become part of common practice today. Transparency and accountability to the beneficiaries as well as their inclusion into aid programmes by participatory planning have become new paradigms.

*By Aloysius John, Head of Institutional Strengthening and Organisational Development, Caritas Internationalis*





## Why impact orientation?

The concept of sustainable development quite often remains vague because the results of evaluations do not provide the opportunity to identify concrete sustainable transformation processes. In order to find out what has been reached, far too often the outputs are put in relation only to the planned targets. However, taking a look at the outcomes and also at the impacts of a project, gives us the chance to record the processes of social change which have taken place among the beneficiaries. According to a definition by OECD, impacts are “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended”<sup>1</sup>. Regardless of the question whether such a definition can be applied to humanitarian aid, it doesn’t explicitly tell what is being meant by effects and with respect to what. The question arises if these effects include the changes in behaviour and attitude of concrete persons. Impact recording may not be confined to the measuring of project results, but it has to analyse clearly if processes of change can be observed in people and, if so, which ones. The practice of Caritas, rich and manifold by nature, leads us to a very practicable definition, based on concrete experience. Impacts can be defined as people’s changes in attitude, capacities and behaviour, leading them to a self-determined life as citizens of a global society. A project intending to liberate poor people out of a culture of poverty shall do so out of moral and spiritual considerations and empower them to a transformed life in dignity. From this perspective impact orientation has also a theological background for Caritas inasmuch as “mercy” is not practiced only as an act of charity but as a service of the Church which strives for the “liberation of the poor”, the “releasing of potentials” of those who are suppressed and deprived of their basic rights. Thus, the development project on a micro-level or the humanitarian activity become triggers of social change and social transformations leading to holistic human development.

## How can impacts be measured?

In the field of development programmes, but also in sustainable disaster aid, impact orientation leads us to the observance of the gaining of skills strengthening the independence of individuals and of a community. “Empowerment” means a number of changes in “being”, “acting” and “having” which altogether trigger changed attitudes, behaviour and long-

term changes in society. These three elements can and must be measured and, along with that, adequate indicators have to be defined.

An impact survey is more than evaluation. Evaluations can be used for that purpose, but the project has to create a reference framework for the impact survey and make sure its focus is on the key issues. The analysis of impact is a process, not an isolated act. The survey can, within the framework of



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project monitoring, be executed by meetings of focus-groups and by regular meetings with the entire communities. Direct observation by the project coordinator and animators is also important. But it is crucial to build upon the beneficiaries and to motivate them to observe processes of change with adequate methods.

## Impact Orientation in the field of partner strengthening

In the field of “capacity-building” the impact survey becomes a means of control to check if the money spent has been invested well. This is legitimate and necessary; however, it only expresses short-term expectations and may lead to false conclusions. To analyse the long-term effects on the partner organizations and to record the changes is a challenge much bigger and more important. Accordingly, a more holistic approach is needed in order to assess the achievements, skills and newly gained potentials of an organization. It is not only a

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2009): Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, page 31



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matter of filling out indicators and showing charts in order to satisfy the funders, but a matter of continual reflection with the partners and their entire team.

Long-term capacity-building transfers the approach, described above, of strengthening potentials and capacities of the target groups, of the people in need, to the players, the operating organizations on the ground. It aims at strengthening the operative and organizational capacities of partners. This requires a deeper reflection, strategies and, most of all, a collective and participatory process which has to be performed by open communication on all levels of the organization. This long-term approach implies fundamental organizational transformation processes concerning the process of decision-making, the mission, the vision as well as the demands for professional work.

Caritas Internationalis is a network of 165 national Caritas organizations worldwide and of numerous associations on the diocesan and local level. This broad-based and complex structure offers tremendous potential. The question of how we make use of it and meet the growing challenges in view of the massive humanitarian emergencies in the world, is crucially dependent on the way how we shape our partnerships and relationships within the network.

### **Aid after the tsunami – an example of successful partnership**

The tsunami disaster in Asia was one of the biggest humanitarian crises worldwide. The aid activities for the affected victims were a historical climax of international solidarity. The Caritas-network mobilized more than 500 Million US Dollars for humanitarian work in the three most affected countries

India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In the case of Sri Lanka, the disaster affected an ethnically split country, marked by years of civil war in which it was very difficult to move freely.

Caritas Sri Lanka was present all over the country, and it immediately mobilized local help on parish level, but the extent of the disaster exceeded its capabilities. Three days after the disaster nine international Caritas organizations were on the ground, and Caritas France was asked by Caritas Sri Lanka to lead the common aid activities. The various international Caritas organizations were assigned to the respective local structures in order to perform a common need assessment. Sri Lanka's Bishop's Conference implemented a "task force" with representatives of the Church and the civil society of both ethnic groups to define the strategic path. A management team of Caritas Sri Lanka and the civil society played a central role in coordination on the operational level. Aid workers from abroad took action only with the consent of Caritas Sri Lanka. As the leading organization, Caritas France had a supportive "coaching" part for Caritas Sri Lanka, and purposely left the actual project management to it. Ten days after the disaster a coordinated first emergency programme had been set up. Step by step comprehensive aid operations were drafted, Caritas Sri Lanka's staff rose from approximately 100 up to more than 600 within a short period of time, which had been an enormous challenge for the organization.

The management assessed the aid operations on a weekly basis, discussed weaknesses and problems and made decisions on countermeasures. The task force and the Bishop's Conference received weekly reports. Regular evaluations and audits were carried out. After six years an impact evaluation of the aid rendered and the supporting strategies were carried out; as this evaluation showed, the efforts to create a climate



of trust and cooperation between the intervening Caritas structures turned out to be a success. Initial solo efforts, made due to the perceived pressure of having to act even faster, led to failures and unadjusted aid operations. Thanks to regular evaluations mistakes could be identified and corrected. The goal of sustainable disaster aid for the survivors of the catastrophe had been reached.

It proved right to put the local Caritas at the heart of the operations. It succeeded in facing the massive challenges of the major disaster, in building up sustainable structures and in reinforcing its resilience. France's self-limitation on training, coaching and supporting left space for that. But at least just as important was the role of the local Church which had the political will to accompany the forthcoming transformation processes in a positive manner.

## Outlook

In 2014 Caritas Internationalis, after a long consultation process within the network, set new management standards. For all members worldwide these are binding quality standards for their institutional constitution and competences and they will become a central reference for partner strengthening processes in the network. Regular accompanied self-assessments will document transformation processes over the years. In addition to looking at single organizations we will also have to observe the relationships between the members. It cannot be overemphasized that changes in relationships are of crucial importance in organizational development. They are hard to identify. Nevertheless impact orientation has to measure what is important, and not only what is easily visible. Again and again, a major disaster turns out to be the moment of truth for our network. We will receive valuable insights on how to coordinate aid for the victims of war and violence even more effectively and, along with that, strengthen our local partners even more, if we evaluate the interactions – whether successful or not – of our members, as described above in the case of Sri Lanka.

> Aloysius John is the Head of the Institutional Strengthening Department and Organizational Development at Caritas Internationalis, the worldwide Caritas-network with 165 national member associations. Caritas Internationalis is based in Rome.

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# WASH and Food Security in Ethiopia

## Participatory Impact Monitoring within an Illiterate Population

Backing up the achievements of sectoral project targets with facts, like, for instance, the reduction of water transmitted diseases, seems to be easy only at first glance. Survey results may be distorted out of fear of no longer qualifying for support – or, vice versa, in the hope of receiving further support. Quite often, critical scrutinizing is being misunderstood by beneficiaries. Justifiably, the target groups remain suspicious when they are not aware of the purpose of the survey and of the consequences of its results. In Ethiopia, Caritas/Hararghe Catholic Secretariat (HCS) succeeded in carrying out an exemplarily frank survey with participants of a project within a mainly illiterate population.

*By Afework Teklu Betemariam  
and Volker Gerdesmeier*



The population of the Federal State of “Somali Regional State” consists of pastoralists and agropastoralists, living mainly on cattle breeding. 65 percent of the population in the project area are rearing goats, 18 percent rearing sheep. Only seven percent can afford bovine animals, camels or donkeys. Their food security is mainly dependent from the droughts, meanwhile recurring every year, triggered by deforestation, soil erosion and the climate change which, in the area of Shinile, manifests itself by very high temperatures and lacking rainfalls. With many vulnerable families generating a small income by selling firewood and charcoal, the strong increase in population also increases the problems of water shortage and soil erosion. As a result of the dry periods there is a lack of pastures, there are big losses in harvests and forage, and there are cases of malnutrition and diseases which affect people and animals alike. With the lack of alternative possibilities to raise an income, the majority of the population suffered from an insecure food situation. Moreover, survival in that area is hampered by non-functioning markets, extreme price fluctuations and a political environment neglecting the special needs and potentials of the pastoralists’ economy and way of life.

### The available amount of water per capita is below the sphere standard

Livestock breeders in the area have limited access to veterinary services, education and water. The result of an initial investigation at the start of the project showed that less than one third of the population had the chance to consume clean drinking water.

Women and girls had to spend four to six hours a day to collect water. In average, the amount of water available for one person a day is twelve to thirteen litres, which is less than the humanitarian quality standard of “Sphere” recommends e.g. for the supply in refugee camps. The families’ food production is low. There is a lack of knowledge and of equipment like seeds, tools, oxen and tractors, and it is difficult to prepare new and dormant land for cultivation.

It has been the goal of the project “Improvement of Living Conditions for Pastoralists and Agropastoralists” to in-



By means of the “scoring-method” the number of diarrhoea cases are identified by the group

crease the income of the population overall by diversification of income sources and thus provide more food security. Especially improved health conditions of animals, better water supply and further training of the population in cultivation methods and ways of seeding shall contribute to this goal.

The project was carried out in the administrative units of Shinile, Aysha and Dembele, together with the local population and administration during the period of 19 months, from June 2011 till December 2012. Various members of the Caritas network, during the last stage especially Caritas Germany, ensured the financing.

Nearly 13.000 households, that’s nearly 70.000 people, were supported and accompanied within the framework of the project.

### Focus groups and “scoring method”

The evaluation was deliberately carried out not until three months after the end of the project. Thus, the population surveyed had the opportunity of retrospectively looking back and of assessing the project’s impact to some extent.

There were four typical communities that had been chosen. Two focus group discussions were held in each community. In total, 83 people were surveyed, thereof 40 men and 43 women. In addition to this, twelve representatives of the local authorities (water administration, health office etc.) were surveyed.

In order to be able to assess the achieved impact together with the largely illiterate population, changes which occurred as a result of the project were scored (“before-and-after-scoring”<sup>1</sup>). Each focus group received 100 points (objects like stones, sticks etc.). Then specific problems were raised, e.g. diarrhoea of children caused by unclean water. The group discussed how many children under the age of five had fallen ill before the start of the project. The result was captured graphically by splitting the points into two segments. One segment stood for children who had diarrhoea at least once before the start of the project. The second segment stood for children who didn’t fall ill during the same three months. The result specified a

<sup>1</sup> A method of participatory impact assessment which is also recommended by the renowned Feinstein International Center: Andrew Catley, John Burns, Dawit Abebe, Omeno Suji, Participatory Impact Assessment. A Guide for Practitioners. <http://fic.tufts.edu/> ; Similar methods were developed by NGO-Ideas: <http://www.ngo-ideas.net/home/>



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*Especially girls and women benefit from the reduction of time spent on the fetching of water*

certain proportion of children who had fallen ill before the start of the project. Subsequently the situation after the end of the project was discussed and also captured graphically. There was some obvious change in the before/after comparison. On average, in all surveyed focus groups, the number of children under the age of five who had suffered from diarrhoea had decreased by one third, due to hydraulic engineering within the project. The assessors compared the figures with the local authorities' statistics. And also those figures suggested a reduction of diarrhoea.

Similarly, various topics were discussed with the focus groups and recorded. For instance, regarding the subject of animal health issues, ranking lists were created before and after the project intervention and it was identified by scoring, per major disease, how the number of animals falling ill had changed over time. Thus, it became obvious that in general far less animals died compared to the time before the project, but it became also clear that some specific diseases had not been taken into consideration sufficiently by the project's consultant, or that they had occurred and increased only recently. Thus, by this differentiated method a problem was identified which would have not been identified by conventional project monitoring.

In addition to these formalized methods, individual stories of the people questioned were surveyed and recorded in an open and qualitative form; they provide important supplementary information.

### **The time for fetching water was reduced enormously**

Another result of the evaluation, along with the mentioned outcomes, was the fact that, after the project, the time girls and women have to take to fetch water, had reduced down to less than 30 minutes in 80 percent of the cases surveyed. The hydraulic engineering measures had some other impacts. One of the beneficiaries surveyed said:

*»Caritas HCS repaired the livestock's drinking trough which were connected to the newly built deep wells. Thus, the community was enabled to water their cattle within a range of a 30-minutes-walk. Since the animals have to walk less, they supply more milk and are healthier. Children, especially girls, are tending the animals. With less time needed to water the animals, they now attend school more frequently and their school performance has improved.«*

In the field of agriculture, the results were less positive. The distribution of seeds and tools as well as the trainings given did not result in better harvests. There was too less of rainfall and support of irrigated farming was not envisaged.

By means of saving groups 136 women generated an income spent for food for the families as well as for clothes and school material for their children. One of the women surveyed said:

*»I received a micro credit from the saving group and Caritas/HCS supported my training. I opened a stall selling coffee and tea with which I earn 450 Birr (about 19 Euros) a month. I send part of that money to my son who studies at the university in Jijiga. I also finance the primary school education of the younger children. The project gave me confidence and the opportunity to continue my children's education at school and at the university.«*

Furthermore, the surveys within the framework of the evaluation delivered an indirect positive impact on the saving groups. The saving groups gained acceptance in their communities by their indirect function of administrating the saving deposits and micro credits. As a result of that they were requested to perform other tasks and, for instance, settled conflicts in families or convinced them to send also their girls to school. They also stepped in to buy medicals drugs for particularly needy women.

The project components of water supply and animals' health delivered very important impacts, yet their sustainability, however, is at risk. The families either do not wish, or are unable, to pay the communities' officers who are in charge of animal health and are no longer able to buy new medicines. Some community mem-



bers were also trained as mechanics to maintain the wells, pumps and pipelines. However, they are overstretched with the task of maintaining the deep wells which are run by generators. It was assumed that the local staff of the government's water authorities would be able to repair the generators in case of a technical breakdown. Unfortunately this is not the case, they lack knowledge as well as means of transport. Only the staff members of Caritas/HCR have the capacities required, but after the end of the project they are less frequently around in that area, so in case of a breakdown the deep wells stand still for seven up to ten days.



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*Due to the intensive interviews problems were identified which had remained undetected hitherto*

## Conclusion

As a whole, the surveys showed that the expected impacts – which otherwise often were assumed without any other cross-checks, let alone systematic surveys of the target group – have really been achieved. Indirect impacts have also been proven. Especially women could be relieved by better water supply and they could make use of the time, thus gained, to generate an additional income for their families.

Food security improved by higher incomes and, as a consequence, the possibility to buy additional food items. Agricultural production did not improve due to lacking rainfall. Therefore, Caritas/HCS is considering to support irrigated farming in future projects. This, however, rises totally new questions with respect to applicability and cost efficiency.

The result of the impact monitoring also led to an intensive dialogue between Caritas/HCS and the local authorities in charge of animal health. The aim is that the trained local health worker will be integrated into the state system and thus ensure access to cheaper medical drugs.

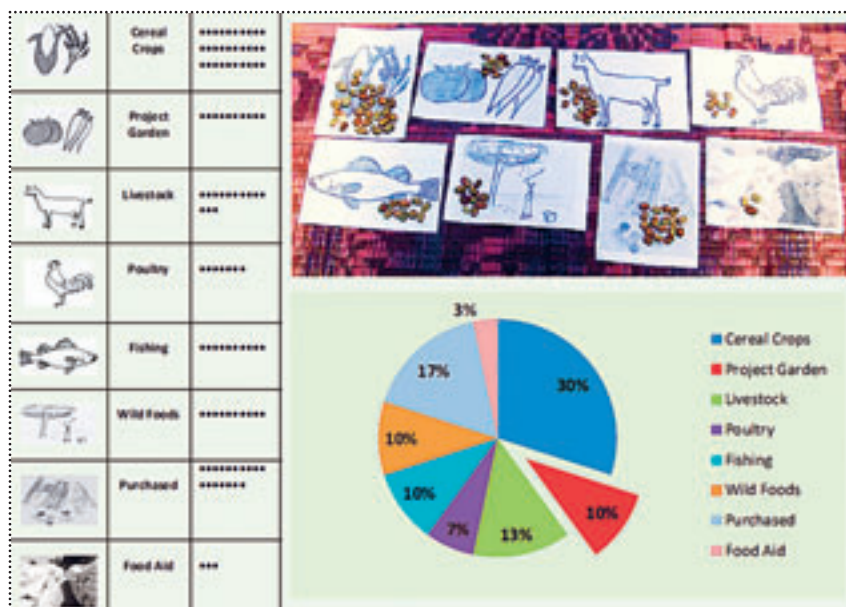
The surveys also made clear how important the strengthening of the local services for water supply would be, especially better training and means of transport for

the staff. This, however, is outside of the sphere of influence of Caritas. Nevertheless the result of the impact monitoring led to the fact that now lively discussions with the administration are being held.

➤ Afework Teklu Betemariam is director of the evaluation unit at Hararghe Catholic Secretariat/Caritas Hararghe (HCS)

➤ Volker Gerdesmeier is director of the Quality Management Unit of the International Department of Caritas Germany

*An example for the appliance of the "scoring method": Taken from Andrew Catley, John Burns, Dawit Abebe, Omeno Suji, Participatory Impact Assessment. A Guide for Practitioners. <http://fic.tufts.edu/>*





# Can no Worsening Deem a Success?

## A Systematic Before/After Comparison of an Emergency Project in Afghanistan

A thorough before/after comparison is not only useful to register the impact of a project, but also to take the massive changes in the immediate surroundings into consideration. Within a project for food security in the Afghan area of Hazarajat, an endline study was systematically built upon a baseline study, carried out before the start of the project. Thus, it could be proved counterfactually that a massive deterioration of the situation, which was to be expected due to another occurring drought during the period, could be prevented although the project did not result in sustainable improvement of food security.

*By Alexander Pforte  
and Sandino Rothenbücher*

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The province of Daikundi is situated about 300 kilometres from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, in the central highland which, due to its predominant ethnicity, the Hazara, is called Hazarajat. It has an estimated population of 440.000. The province is marginalized by the central government on account of its isolation, but also for political reasons. Before the province was founded in 2004, there were only two schools and one health centre for the whole population of that area.

According to UN-OCHA, Hazarajat is still one of the poorest and agriculturally least productive areas of Afghanistan. Yet, the majority of the inhabitants lives on agriculture which, however, only in very few cases can guarantee food security. Due to the long and hard winter seasons the cultivation possibilities are limited; there is but one harvest a year. In addition to farming, the only (quite rare) chance of earning some extra money is working as a day labourer.

Therefore, many families are forced to search for alternative income opportunities outside of this region. Hence, there is large outward migration. The family members staying back (mostly women, children and elderly people) receive, at best, money transfers from those who had left. But in most cases the households have to take on heavy debts (from merchants and among other sources) just to cover the basic daily needs.

Moreover, overgrazing of mountain slopes by cattle and the chopping down of brush to get some firewood led to massive erosions of the soil layers containing humus. As a result of this there were extensive dry periods and, during the raining seasons, floods in the years of 2011 and 2012. The subsequent loss of harvests led to an increase of prices for basic food of 10 up to 15 percent.



*It is often the women, children and elderly people who have to stay back in the poorest region of Afghanistan which are marked by extensive dry periods and seasonal floods*

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### Food items as pay for co-operation

The goal of the project, financed by the EU-Emergency-Departement (ECHO), was to contribute to food security for 8.000 people in three valleys of the province of Daikundi for a period of five months. It was coordinated with a long-term project (41 months) of the EU-Development Department EuropeAid which aimed at the issues of food security, income generation programmes and selfhelp-organization of groups of farmers for about 34.000 people. Maintenance of protection walls and irrigation channels in 60 villages were also part of the emergency project, in order to be better prepared in cases of future natural disasters. Instructed by local Caritas-partners, the population carried out part of the work. With no food available on local markets after the winter season, they received food items as pay for their co-operation. After that they received cash. The pay was calculated on the basis of the "Sphere"-standards. Par-

ticularly needy people who were not able to work (ten percent of the target group) received food items as well as cash for free.

### Impact analysis by base- and endline study

In addition to the regular reports of the partners who were carrying out the project, as well as several field visits by Caritas staff, the impact analysis was supported by the establishment of a baseline and an endline study building on it. The methodology was drawn up by the local partner-organization, supported by a consultant from Caritas, on the assumption that as many comparable data as possible should be collected.

The goal of the baseline was to analyse the initial situation, which had already been briefly analysed before the start of the project in the course of quick need assessment, more thoroughly. But thus, at the same time, an important reference point for the final evaluation was being created.



The baseline- as well as the end-line study comprised household surveys, carried out by means of a questionnaire laid down, as well as semi-structured open group inquiries (Focus Group discussions).

45 out of 60 villages were chosen on the basis of their profiles in order to guarantee a representative mix. In each village two households were identified as random samples. 151 adults were interviewed, thereof 48 percent women. The same households, with the exception of one single case, were also interviewed for the endline. But the proportion of women and men remained the same. 80 percent of the people interviewed were beneficiaries, the rest were non-beneficiaries who received the same thorough briefing on the goals of the analysis and willingly provided information.

### Food purchases made 95 percent of the respondents run into debt

The baseline study proved that people in this area live virtually only on bread, dairy products and tea. Only 17 percent had vegetables and only 14 percent fish once a week. It was somewhat surprising that some (modest) stored food was still left, which should have been consumed already six months ago according to the need assessment. It could not be clarified if this was due to new purchases or to even more reduced consumption.

35 of the 151 respondents did not own land for cultivation. 49 owned land but were not able to cultivate it, because they did not have money for equipment



Measuring the density of plants: A farmer counts the number of the stalks of wheat per 50x50 cm

or additional staff or also because there were no irrigation possibilities. Nearly all the people interviewed had livestock. Only few had emigrated from the villages (about 200 out of 13.600) and only a few reported that their source of income consisted of money transfers from those who had migrated. 95 percent of the respondents were indebted, with 450 Euro per family on average, most of them due to food purchases.

Thanks to the food and the income generated in the course of the project, the families had better food at the time of the endline study. 84 percent of the respondents had beans, 54 percent other vegetables which they had grown on their own or purchased. However, that was only a short-term effect: The harvest yielded between the baseline in May and the endline in November was very low due to another drought in 2013.

Already two months after the yielding of the crop most of the respondents had only a two-month's supply of food stored, which meant that another long phase of food shortage had to be bridged.

### The number of meals is not an appropriate Indicator

The survey proved that the number of meals per day, which is frequently applied elsewhere, was not an appropriate indicator in that very case. Most of the respondents had fewer meals per day after the project. However, they regarded this as an improvement, stating that now they had more wholesome food and thus had to satisfy hunger less often.

The number of households cultivating land as well as the agricultural area cultivated had decreased between base- and endline. This indicates that the income gained within the project was not sufficient to buy operating equipment (or could be used for improved irrigation). The debt level also re-



The harvest yields and food situation of the recent months are being reconstructed in a joint process.



mained high. From the start until the end of the project it declined only by six percent.

However, 87 percent of the respondents declared that they would have run into even higher debts, had they not received the income of the project. The income enabled some repayment of debts, purchasing of food and of medical drugs. The prevention of more price increases on the market was attributed as an impact of the project by more than 90 percent of the respondents.

Nearly all the respondents were in favour of the dual approach linking the distribution of food items or cash to co-operation in the project. The quality of food distributed was consistently assessed as good or very good.

### Conclusion of the comparison

Many interesting insights for the project work were gained by in-depth impact monitoring, for instance results on the income situation of the farmers, their debt level, their own strategies to overcome extreme emergency situations. We have also made useful experiences in regard to methodology of impact monitoring. We learned, for instance, how important it is not only to frame questions precisely and clearly and translate them into the respective national language, but also to have them cross-checked by someone who is familiar with the local language habits. This is the only way to avoid major distortions in the data collection caused by nuances in the wording which depend on the locally predominant dialect.

The results of the comparative study may seem rather disappointing to outside parties: There was only a short-term improvement of the food situation, the debt level decreased only slightly;



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*The evaluation proved that less people than assumed receive money transfers from those who migrated and many had to run into debt in order to purchase more food*

the people are still in a needy situation. The respondents, however, identified the fact that, in spite of a new drought during the project period, their situation did not worsen, as an important impact of the project. The food situation did not worsen, the food prices remained stable and the debt level did not increase. This before/after comparison showed evidence of this impact. Therefore, the basic question raised by the analysis is: Can a project be evaluated as successful when there was no improvement, but also no deterioration? We believe it can. But, as the in-depth impact monitoring of the project proved, the project was not sufficient to combat the misery of the people sustainably. Other projects, long-term ones as the EU-supported project on food security mentioned above, are of great significance. Impact monitoring demonstrated clearly how

important DRR-measures (Disaster Risk Reduction), carried out over a wide area, are to stabilize the region. Such activities would strengthen also the sustainability of ongoing or completed projects. After all, this would be more in terms "Help for self-help", since the government's capacities won't improve for the foreseeable future.

➤ Alexander Pforte is Caritas Germany's programme coordinator for Afghanistan

➤ Sandino Rothenbüchler is Caritas Germany's desk-officer for Central Asia

# Voucher-Distribution versus "Cash Transfers"

A real-time evaluation in a refugee project in Jordan

An essential element of Caritas' concept for improved impact orientation is to differentiate between areas of support and to apply appropriate methods, suitable for each respective area of support, in impact assessment. In an emergency project for Syrian refugees in Jordan a so called real-time evaluation, supported by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, was carried out during the project period. The defined goal was to evaluate, together with the local partner, Caritas Jordan, the distribution of vouchers and the distribution of relief items compared to "cash transfers", in order to draw conclusions for the ongoing project as well as for future projects.

By Traudl Ott

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The military conflicts in Syria between the government, the so called “Islamic State” and diverse rebel groups claimed thousands of victims among the civil population and forced millions of people to flee to neighbouring countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq). Many of these countries have hosted a large number of refugees in proportion to the number of their national inhabitants.

At the time of the evaluation, in November 2013, the situation in Jordan had already reached such a critical point that the capacity of the refugee camps to receive refugees and handle the organization had exceeded; in the Zaatari-Camp (with more than 180.000 people living there in April 2013), for instance, close to the border, the situation was close to stopping any further reception. As a result of this, an estimated 75 percent of the 480.000 Syrians who were seeking refuge in Jordan (according to the official figures of the government of Jordan) tried, evading the camps, to find accommodation in Jordan cities and communities. Often the refugees’ valuables and cash were soon exhausted due to the high costs for rents, medical drugs and food. Many refugees, among them many minors, had to accept precarious jobs in agriculture or construction work. Girls in many cases worked as house maids or were married early for the sake of material safeguard.

### Care for refugees outside of the camps

Ever since the start of the conflict in Syria, Caritas Jordan has rendered humanitarian aid for refugees who found accommodation outside of the camps. People dependent on aid can go straight to one of the ten Caritas centres where they are getting registered and where their needs are assessed. Caritas Jordan maintains a quite

comprehensive electronic database which is networked with all of the eight locations which are recording beneficiaries. Thus, double registration is virtually impossible.

It was the goal of the project financed from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany to cover the most urgent needs for food and other relief items like hygienic articles, mattresses, blankets and, in view of the approaching winter, radiant heaters, for barely 15.000 households (74.000 people). Furthermore, the refu-

### Three ways of distribution

The aid was supplied to the beneficiaries in three different ways. Bedding items, for instance, were centrally procured and distributed by Caritas Jordan. The supply of food and hygiene articles, however, was not handled via distributions. Instead, the beneficiaries received vouchers which they could redeem in one of the more than 100 existing branches of a cooperative<sup>1</sup> fostered by the state. The rent subsidies



*With these vouchers refugees can supply themselves with food in one of more than 100 state-supported cooperatives.*

gees received psychosocial support and subsidies for their rents from the project. The project took care of eleven percent of the refugees living outside of the camps. In order to avoid tensions between the refugees and the local population, some of which are also quite poor, 30 percent of the aid was rendered to Jordan families in need.

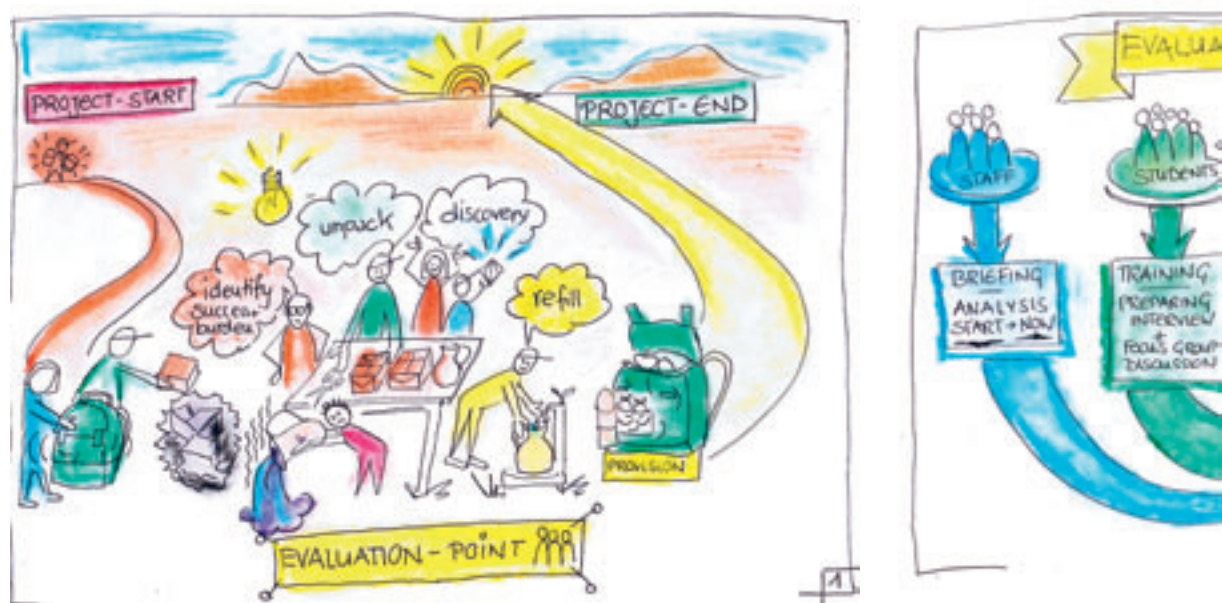
in turn are given directly to the landlords in the form of cheques.

It was the defined goal of the real-time-evaluation to review the appropriateness<sup>2</sup> as early as possible in order to be able to carry out some alterations if necessary. Moreover, the results, thus gained, allow conclusions on the future planning of the follow-up project.

<sup>1</sup> An independent cooperative which makes low priced food available to Jordan families with a small income, which also employs jobless civilians and which distributes, several times a year at benefit events, food and other items for free to the poorest families in the area  
<sup>2</sup> The evaluation criterion of “appropriateness” analyses the question to what extent the measures meet the needs on the ground.  
 In the field of humanitarian work it is recommended as a variation of the criterion of “relevance”, which is common in development cooperation. See ALNAP (2013): Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Pilot Guide, page 59



*Along with the analysis of the emergency project the training of Caritas Jordan's staff was another goal of the realtime evaluation*



The analysis focussed on the voucher system, in comparison to other kinds of aid. But also the internal operating processes, the personal and logistic capacities as well as coordinating mechanisms with third parties were part of the analysis. Due to limited space in this text, the results gained can only be described in regard to the voucher system.

### 318 interviews made possible by cooperation with the university

With the staff of Caritas Jordan already being fully occupied with the ongoing work, ten chosen students from the Social Research Institute were involved in the survey. I introduced the methodology to all the involved participants in an initial workshop and had them discussed. Part of the discussion dealt with the goal of the learning evaluation and to spare the participants the fear of an external audit (see illustrations).

In this initial workshop, the jointly developed tools for data collection were put to the test. Sensitive issues were discussed intensively in order to ensure a harmonized

approach within the survey and to avoid misunderstandings. To name but one example, language differences between Jordan Arabic (those who asked the questions) and Syrian Arabic (those who were asked the questions) were discussed in the team after one test with Syrian staff of Caritas Jordan.

The discussions were voluntarily led in four out of eight Caritas drop-in centres with everybody interested. Intentionally one control group was surveyed which was still in the process of registration and had not received any help yet. In total, 318 persons were surveyed in individual interviews, family discussions and group discussions; two thirds of them were beneficiaries, one third consisted of non-beneficiaries.

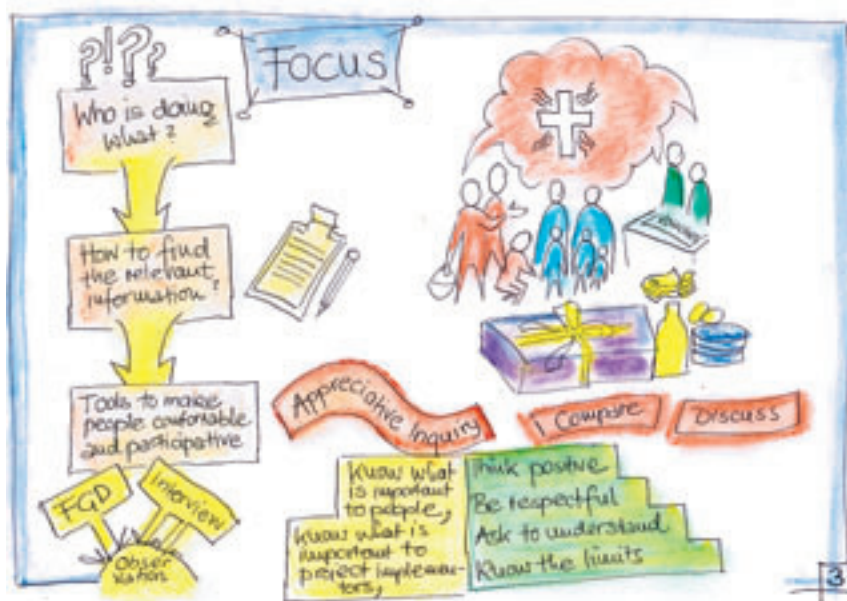
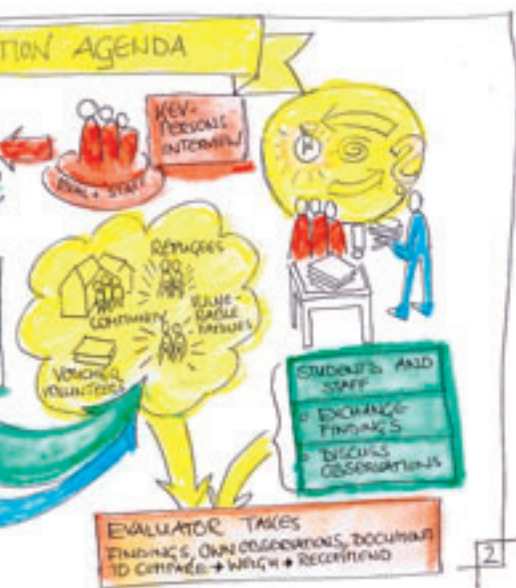
It is the men who, traditionally, speak for all in the visits paid to the families, for which gender-mixed teams were a precondition. Making use of this tradition, we could, after some respectful introduction, get access to the women via the men, and the women could explain their situation very frankly to the female members of the team.

The whole procedure took place in a learning atmosphere which was appreciated by everybody and which offered insight into international standards of humanitarian aid to the interested students who could thus also experience the voluntary commitment of a Christian organization for mainly Muslim refugees in their immediate neighbourhood. Caritas Jordan's staff and volunteers alike gained important impetuses from an external perspective. They faced criticism but also received positive confirmation for their work.

### Favourable prices by means of vouchers

Based on the interviews carried out, the conclusion was drawn that under the given conditions the voucher system for food and hygiene articles is the most appropriate way to help, compared with other kinds of aid. The advantages mentioned were:

- More safety for the target group: Compared to "cash transfers" there is no need to carry cash. Since the vouchers can only be redeemed together with an identity-card, the risk of robbery is low



- Favourable prices: By gaining access to the cooperative's shops, which are present all over the country, the food prices were five to ten percent below the prices on the free market
- Low ancillary costs: By saving costs for purchase, storage etc., the voucher system creates less costs than distributions of items do, and it is much easier to control: By presenting the voucher, the branches receive cash from Caritas Jordan which makes sure that the vouchers are redeemed.

However, the survey unveiled that every fifth beneficiary sold his or her voucher for cash. This occurred not because of the bad quality of food or some need that had not been satisfied, but because the refugees urgently needed cash to buy water, settle transport costs or were financially burdened by a sick family member. Meanwhile cash is distributed to the beneficiaries in addition to the vouchers. Thus, they have the chance to satisfy urgent individual needs autonomously.

Another result of the evaluation was that the value of the vouchers should be differentiated according to the size of the family which varied between two and eight members. The voucher's value was insufficient for bigger families and should be raised. Meanwhile this has been implemented.

The practice of asking beneficiaries questions on their purchases<sup>3</sup>, for the sake of prevention of embezzlement, has proven highly effective and is recommended by Caritas Germany for similar projects since then.

### Strategic course for further evaluations

The real-time-evaluation proved to be a helpful tool to monitor the appropriateness of measures, still during the ongoing project on the basis of a systematic survey of the target groups, and to adapt follow-up projects accordingly.

Other insights gained in the framework of evaluation like psychic and work-related overstrain of the staff led to innovations, such as accompaniment and support of staff. Involving students gave Caritas Jordan the opportunity to carry out a comprehensive survey in spite of the high workload. The method, developed on a participatory basis and jointly put into practice, gives Caritas Jordan the chance to carry out similar learning evaluations on its own in the future.

➤ Traudl Ott is a free consultant and already carried out a number of evaluations and trainings on impact orientation for Caritas Germany, among them the realtime evaluation in Jordan which is introduced here

<sup>3</sup> On a regular basis, ten percent of the recipients are selected by random sampling and are asked questions on their purchases over the phone. Thus, it could be identified what they had received, in order to calculate if they had been provided with the full value of the voucher.





# Reconstruction after the Peru Earthquake

## An example of successful participation

In addition to rendering emergency relief, it is a major concern of Caritas Germany to sustainably create new living space as well as prospects. In Peru, Caritas supported, after the devastating earthquake in 2007, an integrative reconstruction programme, which also considered the fields of food security, health and social infrastructure. As an evaluation, carried out three years after the end of the project, proved, the participation of the population in the planning and implementation of the project, turned out to be quite successful, resulting in persistent acceptance of the project and its goals involved.

*By Barbara Schnegg  
and Claus Hemker*

An earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale harmed more than 400.000 people in Peru in 2007. The provinces of Cañete and Castrovirreyna in the Andes were mostly affected, with 47.000 houses destroyed and 90.000 uninhabitable or damaged.

Since government-backed aid programmes targeted mainly the middle class, the poorer population living in remote areas was particularly dependent on international aid. Especially in the high-altitude areas of the Andes, people urgently needed dwell-

ings to be protected against the rain and the cold. Schools, health-centres as well as transport infrastructure – basic livelihoods of the agricultural society predominant in this area – were also severely damaged and had to be rebuilt.





## Reconstruction jointly with the people affected

From April 2008 till November 2010, Caritas Germany financed integrative projects in 13 communities which were not considered by national or other international aid projects. 313 affected families were supported through the building of dwellings. Before the earthquake had struck, most families were living in two-storied loam constructions, which are particularly earth-

quake-prone due to their low technical standard. Hardly any light or air could enter through the few small windows. The floors of rammed earth were cold and moist during the raining season. Cooking over open fires inside of the house caused lung diseases. The only water point was in front of the house.

In line with the Caritas principle of sustainable reconstruction to not only build houses but simultaneously improve the living conditions, the concept

“Vivienda Saludable” (health-promoting dwelling) was developed for this project, together with the local partner. Right from the start, the concept aimed at involving the population in the planning process and defining the project goals in a dialogue.

Along with the reconstruction of houses extensive measures in the fields of road construction and irrigation were carried out, as well as trainings in construction know-how and agriculture.



© Claus Hemker

»The population had high expectations of the project. For that reason the communities were to lead discussions about their expectations, without the Caritas-team joining, and finally make a decision on their own. Afterwards the viability of this decision was examined by Caritas and it was implemented as far as possible.«

Project Coordinator,  
Caritas Cañete

Inhabitants of an Andean village producing clay bricks for the reconstruction of their houses.



## Qualitative surveys three years after the project

Nearly three years after the end of the reconstruction project, the co-author, as external construction expert, visited the communities within the framework of the evaluation in March 2012.<sup>1</sup> For two weeks all players involved in the project were interviewed: the population (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), local authorities (20) as well as the staff of the national and local Peruvian Caritas. The interviews and discussions were based on key questions on the topics of goals achieved, aspects of construction and social issues as well as context and cooperation.

Overall, we had eight group discussions, partly at village assemblies, with about 1600 participants in total.

We visited 36 houses and interviewed the inhabitants of the houses and the village in informal individual conversations. Furthermore, we visited three community centres, one maternity ward as well as a retaining wall. The interviews had a specific qualitative focus in order to get a highly

differentiated picture. We deliberately avoided standardized questionnaires to make sure we could cover all kinds of problems, even unexpected ones.

## Wide acceptance by successful participation

The evaluation clearly demonstrated that the goals targeted had been achieved in a convincing manner and were still being pursued three years later. The people involved in the project were proud of their work and identified themselves with the objectives of the project. The very individual designs of the houses with paintings, decorations and pictures is a sign of the inhabitants' good identification with their houses.

*»Caritas was the only organization ever supporting us. Therefore, we regard the earthquake as a chance for our community.«*

*Village leader  
of the coastal village Huantay*

The statements given confirmed that significant basic improvements of the overall situation had taken place. The beneficiaries mentioned their general housing conditions which has a positive effect on cleanliness, security, comfort and health, as well as the social and agricultural infrastructure which contributed to the improvement of their livelihood and from which, above all, also non-beneficiaries benefited.

*»Now it's much cleaner inside of our houses. The children are healthier, they can play on the floor because it is not only soil any longer. The new floor of cement can be kept clean. We only have to get used to sweeping.«*

*Resident of the Andean village of Mallqui*

The trainings offered were regarded as useful. The knowledge gained therein was shared willingly. "Increased self-confidence", the chance of leading a "more dignified life", and "more hopeful prospects in life" were described as indirect impacts.

"People's quality of life is better today. There were no prospects before the earthquake ('vida sin visión'), today they enjoy life (gusto de vivir). There is an obvious change in the minds of the people and especially of children." (teacher from the Andean village of Chupamarca).

The telling motto of Caritas Huancavelica "No construimos viviendas, construimos vidas" (We don't build houses, we build life) was put into practice successfully.

According to the results of the evaluation, the following factors have crucially contributed to the success of the project:

*La Casa de los Sueños – in the course of planning preparations the inhabitants designed their dream house.*



Reconstruction after the Peru Earthquake

## Challenging and promoting in dialogue

Caritas Germany's call for personal contribution, in accordance with the principle "Help for self-help", turned out to be a great challenge for the affected people. They, in unison with the staff workers of the project, repeatedly mentioned, how important and helpful the intensive professional and moral support of the entire Caritas-team was. Technical assistance from the side of Caritas Germany was endorsed and regarded as valuable support as well as necessary control. It was appreciated by the partner organizations that Caritas Germany, at important stages of the project, was very challenging and made, if necessary, decisions as a neutral external authority, for instance in cases of filling vacancies, in order to prevent personal preferences or nepotism. The project staff met the population at eye level and always lent a hand whenever needed.

**»After the earthquake 95 percent of the houses were destroyed. The inhabitants were confronted with the question of how to organize ourselves in this situation. There were no means available in the village, the access road could not be passed. With the support of the Caritas project we organized the construction of houses in groups. At first we didn't believe we could be able to build a house on our own, but nevertheless everybody joined. Today our houses are completed and we are proud of what we have achieved.«**

*Resident of the Andean village of Chanchahuasi*



Co-author Claus Hemker (front row, right) with a Peruvian Caritas staff-worker at a village assembly.

## Selection of communities and beneficiaries

Communities were selected not only on the basis of criteria of need, but also in regard to social and political structures as well as to the size and homogeneity of settlements. One of the key factors in the decisions was the willingness of the affected people, and of those politically in charge, to actively participate in reconstruction, complying with the basic "rules" of collaboration.

Moreover, neighbouring communities or districts were selected in only two parts of the project area, in order to ease the strain on the limited human resources dealing with project management and logistics. Thus, one regional

project team was able to cover several locations, the number of involved authorities could be limited and conflicts with competitive players were avoided.

It became apparent later that already due to this selection a fundamental cornerstone for the success of the project had been laid.

**»The selection of beneficiaries was handled like this: At first we identified who had suffered harm, and not who was the friend of an influential person. Then we checked if the identified person was the owner of a building site.«**

*Resident of the Andean village of Chanchahuasi*

1 One community in the Andes could not be visited, because the access road was not passable due to heavy rainfall

2 It would have delayed the start of the project substantially to record damages of buildings and site factors beforehand.

The data were provisional and were verified later in the course of the carrying out of project, with the participation of the people affected.

3 The "common concern of all" or the "common welfare". Related to urban planning and house construction everything that cannot be left to the decision of one individual person:

public supply and development, minimum size and use of properties, type and extent of services, "on site reconstruction" or resettlement, construction standards, seismic safety, minimum sanitation etc.

4 Construct with loam or with bricks? Thermal comfort at high altitudes, e.g. by wooden floors?





© Claus Hemker / Caritas Germany

Applying the traditional loam construction allowed the inhabitants to reconstruct their houses on their own.

### Flexible leeways within project planning

In order to be capable of acting quickly and unbureaucratically, some gaps in the gathering of data were accepted in the field of shelter.<sup>2</sup> Instead, a progressive methodology of planning was used which, first, provided the general framework for the “common good”<sup>3</sup>. This affected the design of the budget and the respective handling of costs. The project agreement thus became a framework for the planning of the specific measures, with realistic goals but also leeways for necessary developments. The comprised budget fixed for the building of dwellings was a frequently used guidance. It was not rigid but could be adapted to the circumstances in detail, for instance when, in the course of the participation processes or technical processing, the original plan had to be modified<sup>4</sup> or if solutions to unpredictable problems had to be found.

### Adaptated types of construction

The concept of the new houses followed the traditional types of construction<sup>5</sup> and was the result of intensive confrontation and sensitization of the population. Although it seemed to be quite obvious to adapt traditional types of construction, this was not the perception of the population. Construction technology is continually developing for good reason, that's why the affected people often are inclined to reject traditional types of construction. In Peru various adapted construction techniques are apt for being approved. Building with loam is a type of construction widely accepted in the remote areas of the Andes and for poorer strata there is no alternative to it, just like it doesn't make sense in other locations at the coast. Therefore, the dissemination and advancement of loam construction is supported by the government.

Applying traditional loam construction in the reconstruction programme allowed the population to build their houses on their own, in spite of the high standards with regard to seismic safety. Today, they are making use of this knowledge for themselves and for third parties.

»It is important to the inhabitants of the village to pass the knowledge they had gained on to neighbours and especially to their own children. Thanks to the trainings in house construction we are now also experts and can apply our knowledge. In the past, we just were building one way or the other because we were lacking the technical know-how«

Resident  
of the Andean village of Chupamarca

### Intercultural cooperation

Both Caritas Germany and Caritas Peru felt that their collaboration was an enrichment because everybody involved could contribute experience and also because different positions could be frankly discussed. On the part of Caritas Peru, committed and experienced social workers, shelter experts and financial staff were involved from the very start. Their professionalism was convincing, they were interested in dialogues with colleagues and they knew excellently how to deal with the affected people or win relevant authorities over for collaboration. It was due to their knowledge about the local ways of construction and planning and economic and lifestyle habits of the population that simple and locally adapted (shelter)solutions could be found.

Being involved right from the start helped Caritas Germany's consultants to be accepted. By virtue of their long-standing experience they could ideally contribute to the discussions with their prior knowledge, gained in previous reconstruction programmes, and deliver proven instruments of project management. Thus, even difficult problems like the definition of minimum standards, the acceptance of

<sup>5</sup> Loam construction in the Andean region, quincha (lightweight construction of straw mats with clay plaster) in coastal areas

construction standards, the ways and the extent of personal contribution or additional human resources could mostly be solved relatively fast and amicably.

The presence of internationally experienced experts increased the credibility of the local Caritas in the eyes of the local authorities.

## Reconstruction – a challenge in planning

There are only few planning tasks which have to be prepared and carried out under similarly difficult conditions as in most cases of disaster aid and emergency relief – in accommodating a larger influx of refugees or in reconstructing shelter after major disasters. Traumatized people, overstrained authorities, insufficient infrastructure, lacking resources and the necessity of quick decisions and immediate action lead to a situation where standards, instruments and methods of urban development and design, which otherwise are regulated down to the last detail by construction laws, cannot be implemented temporarily. He who considers such standards in the assessment of a reconstruction programme, does not do justice to the task and to the people involved.

But what points of orientation have people in charge, and we as planners and engineers, got? What are the minimum standards we have to demand on behalf of the common good and what could or should we leave to the affected people? What are the effects of the designing and overbuilding of the environment from the vantage point of those who do not directly benefit from our intervention?

It would surely not be appropriate to consider the issue of quality in construction only in terms of social aspects. The involvement of technical disciplines (urban planners, architects, engineers) is indis-

pensable wherever inadequate infrastructure has led to the destruction of environment or to conflicts between neighbours, and wherever inadequate building technique may lead to the collapse of a house. But the questions are exciting who, in the end, has to take responsibility for what and who is going to involve whom in what. Is it, for instance, admissible to rebuild informal settlements on erosion-prone burial mounds or at locations on the coast which are at high risks of tsunamis? Or will a risk analysis automatically lead to the displacement of the poorest who had chosen that location just because it meets their needs most?

The potential strengths of Caritas in the field of disaster aid was being felt during the reconstruction in Peru in an exemplary manner: Existing local structures, familiarity with the place and situation on the ground and supra-regional involvement were capacities that were complemented and supported by an international network of partners, funders and experts with a vision. The guidelines were useful, the handbooks provided orientation and the project proposal was important to finally draft a demarcated and targeted assignment.

However, it was not the guidelines that mattered but the way the work was accomplished: the way how we as an organization dealt with our partners, how we and the affected people were ready to build on experience and yet were engaged to venture something new, and how the colleagues from different disciplines made a concerted effort, searching for the best possible solution for the affected persons.

We have learned that it is not easy, but with these basic attitude projects can succeed even under difficult framework conditions. The possibility of monitoring the impact of a project several years after its end can deliver important findings on our work as planners and consultants. John F.C. Turner's sentence "I know what a house is, but what does it do?" has not lost much of its topicality.

> *Claus Hemker is an architect and accompanies, as shelter expert for Caritas Germany, reconstruction programmes after major disaster worldwide. He was the supervisor in charge of the reconstruction in Peru*

> *Barbara Schnegg is an architect and carried out the evaluation*



A resident in front of her destroyed house after the earthquake in Peru.



# Impact Monitoring in a Vocational Training Project

## Marginalized Adolescents in Liberia Improve their Future Perspectives

A longer-term vocational training project in Liberia offered the opportunity to carry out the entire spectrum from a baseline study via intensive impact monitoring up to an endline study. The intention was to find out how well the combined project approach (vocational training of youth and guidance of families by social workers) would work in the field of integration of adolescents into the labour-market. Especially the qualitatively oriented original investigation made it possible to record the tension between generations, in view of the fact that the social norms have been massively shaken due to the civil war. The final evaluation proved how extremely powerful the crisis context still is, but also how adolescents could develop scopes of action.

*By Traudl Ott  
and Birgit Kemmerling*

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From 1989 until 2003, Liberia underwent a civil war which was devastating for the society and economy of the country. Extreme atrocities traumatized the society severely, 80 percent of the population had to flee for some time, the gross national product declined down to one tenth of the pre-war level. Until today, more than ten years after the war, Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world. 78 percent of the population generate their income from “vulnerable work”<sup>1</sup>, especially from subsistence economy and informal retail trade. Since 2014 the socio-economic situation has aggravated due to the outbreak of Ebola which meant, in various ways, a setback in the slightly positive development the country had taken.

### Vocational training for adolescents

The project area in Harper in the South-east of the country is marked by fishing trade, subsistence agriculture and the growing of rubber. In numerous little mines gold is being mined. There are hardly any possibilities to generate an income, which puts heavy burdens especially on young family members. Frequently the responsibility of achieving an income is put on them. Therefore, the partner organization Caritas Development Cape Palmas conducts a programme for vocational training and assistance of marginalized and socially disadvantaged adolescents.

450 adolescents received access to different kinds of vocational training (catering, tailoring, design). By networking with local employers, entry into the labour market should be facilitated. Social workers, as an ancillary measure, accompanied and supported them as well as their parents and other community members. Workshops were held with the intention

of attempting to strengthen the adolescents’ self-confidence and improve the cohabitation within the families and communities. Collaboration with authorities and non-governmental institutions was being pursued in order to establish legal protection for the marginalized adolescents.



*Adolescents are discussing with their parents and Caritas staff workers if the vocational training project has improved their situation on the labour market.*

### The recording of social indicators by a progress matrix

Impact monitoring in this project comprised a period of three years, starting with project planning (2012), reflection on the initial situation (baseline, 2013), the development of a monitoring-tool (2014) as well as a comparative study at the end of the project (final evaluation/endline, 2015).

In the course of the baseline, quantitative data on the income, level of education and marital status were collected. In addition to this a more qualitative brief social analysis, as the result of a participatory effort, was carried out in order to record various characteristics of the communities (for instance a more acade-

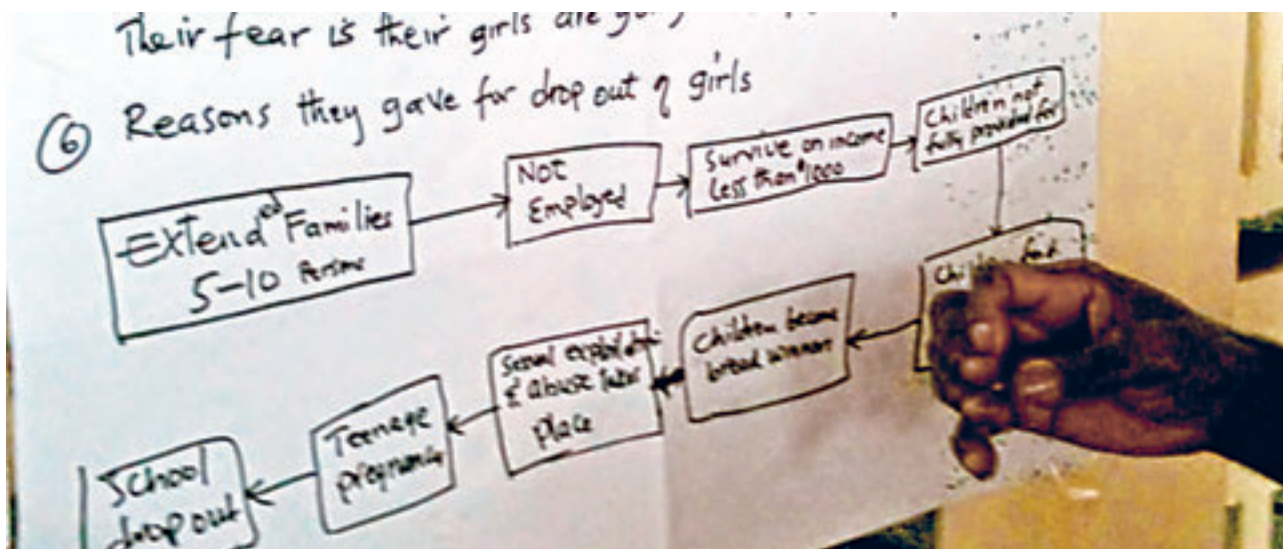
mically marked environment, fishing hamlet, city district with a high unemployment rate, another one with many business people etc.) in the project area as reference for certain project results. On the basis of this social analysis qualitative indicators were elaborated in the form of a so called “progress matrix” in order to be

better able to record changes, the measuring of which might be hard at a later stage, in the adolescents’ self-confidence and in the cohabitation of families and the communities.

Parts of the indicators were the adolescents’ level of knowledge in terms of their rights and reproductive health, but also the degree of responsibility they had within the family and the community. Further indicators identified were the ways conflicts were carried out, the possibilities of participation in youth-related decisions and their participation in community assemblies.

<sup>1</sup> viz. working self-employed on their own account or assisting family members





© Traudl Ott

As it turned out in the evaluation of the interviews, there are still many adolescents dropping out of school because they have to contribute to the income of their families

The carrying out of focus group discussions (FGDs) and guideline interviews were, in the baseline- as well as in the endline analysis, the focus of qualitative data collection. Both of them were based on participatory rural appraisal (PRA), aiming at the inclusion of the knowledge and perspectives of the beneficiaries into project planning and into the implementation process. Overall, eight FGDs and 75 guideline interviews were carried out for the baseline, in four communities with four teams<sup>2</sup>. This data base was extended by 13 FGDs and 180 individual interviews in the endline. Finally, some interviews on the social and economical situation of the beneficiaries were made with various key players of the local authorities (local chiefs, people in charge of the Ministry of Education) as well as with a local youth association and other local and international organizations.

<sup>2</sup> The staff of the partner organization formed four teams, each joined by external interviewers. Preliminary discussions in the communities regarding ethical aspects (no interference, anonymity in documentation, group dynamics) were held before the interviews. Test interviews were carried out. No expense allowances were paid to the participants of the interviews. However, the teams received reimbursement of the transport costs and low expense allowances at the end of the study. Moreover, a certificate of participation was handed out to them as recognition.

### The baseline shows the extent of the generation conflicts

One result of the baseline study was that 75 percent of the young women and men still were living with their parents. Especially in rural areas there was a high pressure on the adolescents to support the family financially. Many adolescents drop out of school early in order to generate an income. It also became apparent in the interviews that trades like fishing, hunting or charcoal burning were regarded as unattractive and that the adolescents more and more were working in (alleged) more lucrative fields of work, for instance as day labourers (mining, transport, construction work) or as motorbike-taxi drivers. As for young women, however, this pressure forced them under certain circumstances into early marriage or even into prostitution. At the same time a massive generation conflict became obvious, with – partly violent – conflicts about rights and duties in the village community or in the families. The parents argued that, especially due to the war, the “traditional” joint relationship between parents and children were disbanded. From the adolescents’ point of

view the reputation of authority figures, who had entered shifting alliances during the war, has declined. The low education level of the parents (partly also a result of the war) is another reason of the negative attitude of the youth toward their parents. More and more the reference persons for the adolescents come from the *peer group*.

### What has been achieved?

The respondents of the interviews held in the final examination alleged that they regard the project as very relevant, and that it shows them perspectives which could improve their situation. The majority of the participants succeeded in receiving a degree, but did not automatically gain a foothold in working life. This was easier for tailors and bakers, whereas adolescents trained in batik work could not find any local craftsmen. Furthermore, in this case the production is highly dependent on high-quality material which has to be bought in Monrovia. As it turned out, we have to put a stronger emphasis on intensive follow-up support and networking with local trades in the future.

Two conflicts of objectives became apparent in the course of the interviews: The contents of the vocational training of the programme was, on one hand, tailor-made for young women, since they are particularly disadvantaged. This customization was criticized by the communities, because according to their point of view it is crucial for peaceful co-existence to create employment opportunities especially also for young men. Caritas Cape Palmas will therefore, in the next project phase, carry out vocational trainings in traditional male professions like e.g. plumbers, electricians and motorbike mechanics.

The other conflict of objectives concerns the involvement of families. In order to involve parents, agreements were signed with them, according to which they have to support the adolescents' entry into the labour market by, for instance, the financing of material. It became obvious that poorer families could not afford this personal contribution. That's why the success of the project can only be achieved with less marginalized families. Now the project partners intend, by intensified work in the villages, to put a stronger focus on the parents' advocacy for this vocational phase of the adolescents.

The accompanying measures to strengthen the self-confidence of the beneficiaries were also appreciated by the interviewed



*Most of the adolescents could complete their vocational training*

adolescents, parents and community members. Now the adolescents are more aware of their rights and have acquired social skills and capacities in the settling of conflicts. As, however, the progress matrix proved, these imparted skills are not reflected in a change of behaviour. This fact would not have been identified by a mere query on the level of knowledge. One likely explanation is that the project period of three years is much too short for social change. That's why the project partner is planning awareness raising measures for the communities in the next phase. Men and women, well-known from social or professional life, shall be invited to present alternatives to the

fragile traditional role expectations in the villages to the adolescents.

The advocacy work of Caritas Development Cape Palmas can be assessed in a similar manner. It turned out in the experts' interviews that the programme is well known and appreciated among the players. Yet, no significant changes became evident in local politics; according to the respondents this might be due to generally lacking resources and the outbreak of Ebola. Taking Liberia's long history of conflict into account as well as the still prevailing poverty, economic distress and the additional crisis caused by the outbreak of Ebola, the framework conditions remain so disadvantageous that a fundamental improvement of the living conditions for marginalized adolescents is not realistic within a project period of three years. Nevertheless the programme has, in the eyes of the adolescents and their families, opened up scopes for action in terms of vocation, but also in terms of social skills, which can be used in the future.

- Traudl Ott was coordinating the impact monitoring process presented here as a consultant
- Birgit Kemmerling is Caritas Germany's desk officer for Liberia



*The Ebola crisis prevented structural changes on the political level*



# Impact Monitoring from the View of the Affected People

The great impact study “Weaving Hopes After Disasters” compares aid programmes in India ten years after the tsunami

Together with the NGO of IGSSS<sup>1</sup> and the “India Social Institute”, Caritas India, supported by Caritas Germany, carried out an evaluation of emergency and reconstruction projects after the tsunami and several other natural disasters in India. The comparative view on major aid programmes in various regions, ten years after they started, is an outstanding achievement of that evaluation. It builds on a systematic survey of beneficiaries and delivers, to some extent, representative results, combined with individual statements. Thus, difficult issues like, for instance, the issue of strengthened self-help competence and community development could be analysed.

By Peter Seidel

On the occasion of the tenth memorial day of the tsunami in South-east Asia the idea was born, inspired by the “Listening Project”<sup>2</sup> of the team headed by Mary Anderson, to carry out an extensive survey of those who could most directly judge and assess the impacts – the affected people themselves!

- Which impact is emphasized most by those who were affected? What remains? How sustainable are the effects of disaster aid in retrospect in the eyes of the beneficiaries?
- What was most important to them? How satisfied are they, from a long-term perspective, with various elements of the aid services rendered?
- What could have been done better according to their point of view? What are they recommending for future disasters?

In order to answer these questions, the Social Institute, under the guidance of Jo-



A women self-help group in Pulicat, an area severely hit by the tsunami

seph Xavier, carried out a scientific study on the beneficiaries' satisfaction with aid programmes, which had been performed after several major disasters: “Weaving Hopes After Disasters”.<sup>3</sup>

India is a good choice for such a large-scale study because it is repeatedly afflicted by severe natural disasters. The earthquake in Gujarat in 2001, the tsunami at the coasts of Tamil Nadu and Andra

Pradesh in 2004, the floods in Bihar in 2007 and 2008 and the cyclones and floods in Orissa in the years of 1999, 2001 2003 gave rise to extensive emergency relief and reconstruction efforts, to economic and psychosocial support as well as disaster preparedness programmes which were provided by local Caritas organizations, by Caritas India and partner organizations from the international Caritas network.

For the sake of enabling learnings of these programmes, the idea was not to just simply carry out an evaluation by external experts. The study, as a scientific documentation, should rather aim at collecting, systematically presenting and interpreting the feedback on the long-term impact, gained from the people affected. It dealt with retrospective assessment of impacts achieved in the five fields of emergency relief, psychosocial support, income generation programmes, shelter and disaster preparedness. The docu-

mentation of socio-economic and cultural changes and improvements, which were perceived in a very subjective manner, were taken into focus as well as the political effects of the aid measures, the promotion of civic commitment, the mobilization of the civil society, the improvement of access to social welfare services and, thus, the promotion of “good governance” and political participation.<sup>4</sup>

### A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods

Qualitative as well as quantitative methods were being applied. Based on predefined questionnaires including open and closed questions 800 beneficiaries were asked how pleased they were with various aspects of the aid. In addition to this, thematically structured group discussions were held in the villages. In order to be able to compare the various opinions and assessments of the various influencing factors, about thirty small groups, divided by criteria of caste or religious affiliations, gender or income levels, were interviewed separately. In the course of these interviews case-studies or “most significant change stories” were documented.<sup>5</sup> The statements of the target groups were contrasted with those of selected staff members of the local Caritas organizations, representatives of local institutions and representatives of the public administration. Overall, 910 persons were interviewed. By means of a specific statistic software the answers were systematized.

### Results of the interviews

The first surprise for the team was the still high appreciation of Caritas and the various ways of aid it had provided, as well as the astonishment the beneficiaries clearly expressed about the fact that an organization

like Caritas, after so many years after the end of aid programmes, still was interested in their opinion of programmes, some of which dated back very long, and their effects. The generally high satisfaction of the people interviewed was, however, contradicted by some critical feedback on some specific issues of the support, when asked for more detailed information. This reflects how profound and differentiated the impacts of different measures were analysed and judged by the beneficiaries.



*Reconstruction after the tsunami: A family reconstructs its destroyed house*

At first glance, the satisfaction strongly depends on the expectations the beneficiaries are having. Extremely marginalized groups of the population which are used to get no support at all, are more satisfied, if they are supported nevertheless, than people who have developed a mentality of entitlement towards the state and NGOs due to their caste or religious affiliation. Taking this into account, this subjective feedback can be interpreted correctly only along with informations on the socio-cultural context: Relatively well-educated Christians expect not only more extensive support from a Catholic aid organization, but also a more intensive participation in the planning and carrying out of a project. They are accordingly more demanding, more critical and harder to satisfy.

### Distribution of relief items

Questions on the usefulness of the distribution of relief items led to the result that two thirds of the interviewed persons gave top priority to the issue of food. In contrast to this there were ten percent who stated that emergency shelter was the most urgent need, and to 3.7 percent water and the providing of health care were of utmost priority. Criticism was aroused on “dumping”, i.e. the aimless offloading of relief items: clothes were not appropriate for the climate, medical drugs were distributed without medical advice, there was too much of school material, of fishing nets or hygiene articles. However, this criticism did not refer specifically to Caritas' activities, since the people interviewed, after the long time which had passed, in many cases could not differentiate between the various NGOs. The question of what could have been improved was, throughout, answered with basically the same suggestions as in the “Listening Project”: There should be more participation of the people affected in the need assessments and in the planning of measures. They want more than just being asked, they want a right to active co-decision on what is being done and distributed. 69 percent of the interviewed persons say that an active participation of the affected people in the planning and need assessment process should be crucial. In contrast to this, only 19 percent think that NGOs alone should decide on aid measures, due to their professional skills.<sup>6</sup>

### Income generating programmes

The answers on the support of income generating measures emphasize similar aspects: Specific solutions and ways of support are required which have to be



developed together with the affected people. General offers for further education, for instance in the handicraft section, which were planned on a drawing board and then offered exhaustively, are often ineffective and don't lead to the satisfaction of "customers".<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of the affected people, detailed market analyses and the enabling of a profound decision between traditional, new and diversified ways to generate an income are the key success factors to achieve sustainable effects, in other words a higher income on a long-term basis. Quite often it is more the locals than the NGOs who have the required know-how. Direct "charitable" offers of NGOs and their staff of an individual improvement of income were more poorly assessed than economic support which was planned, coordinated and controlled with the participation of local committees and self-help groups, and which was also more successful in terms of material help.<sup>8</sup>

## Psychosocial Support

Another interesting aspect is the feedback on psychosocial support within the emergency relief, which was offered intensively by the aid organizations especially after the tsunami. As for this issue, the answers are very different and have to be considered more detailed within the context. In Gujarat, where specific psychosocial support was not part of the services offered, even 15 years after the disaster people reported of many unresolved traumatic experiences. However, in Tamil Nadu, where high-grade psychosocial support was offered after the tsunami, the interviewed people unanimously regarded its effects as helpful in their efforts to cope with their lives again.<sup>9</sup> Material support alone is not sufficient to get back to normal. Concer-

ning this matter, people were accordingly unsatisfied in areas where there was no or hardly any psychosocial support.<sup>10</sup> But the understanding of psychosocial support must also be clear. In the context of India this does not necessarily mean professional psychotherapeutic care. In many cases some emotional accompaniment by volunteers or social workers, who give the people the feeling that they are not left alone with their sufferings, will do.<sup>11</sup> The borders to community based work, in the sense of "animation" and "empowerment", are blurred.



*For many, losing their boat meant losing their livelihood. A fisherman with a Caritas-boat*

## House Construction

Regarding the issue of house construction there is the term of "tsunami miracle" and the realization of the "dream of house construction". In many of Caritas' major disaster programmes the biggest part of the financial means pours into this section. According to the strategy chosen, the participation of the affected people is handled quite differently. The spectrum reaches from complete construction of houses by construction companies and the subsequent handing over to the beneficiaries to the material, financial and technical support of beneficiaries who are building their houses autonomously. In the latter case, the de-

gree of subjective satisfaction, as the interviews on this issue have shown, is much higher for most of people. Even when the quality of the construction, when viewed from outside, is lower and the construction period is longer.<sup>12</sup> Especially extremely poor families mentioned that their limited capabilities to build and later maintain a house were a problem when the shell of a house was handed over to them. That's why their degree of satisfaction is lower. Therefore, successful programmes require a stronger participation of the community even during the selection and planning phases. Only in this way the essential support and solidarity, regarding the needs of each individual case, can be organized effectively – to make sure that every family will get the exact level of support which it really needs.

## Disaster Preparedness

Disaster preparedness is, especially in areas which are regularly subject to disasters, considered as an issue of top priority.<sup>13</sup> Most of the activities carried out up to now were participatory and socio-spatial risk analyses, comprising local planning of activities in close collaboration with the government and the mobilization of voluntary commitment. So disaster preparedness is a decisive and less conflictual link in the transition from emergency relief to sustainable development programmes and participatory community based development. The "re-activating" or rather empowering preparedness has, at the same time, psychosocial effects as a sort of healing follow-up care. Disaster preparedness also firmly comprises inclusion and the consideration of the needs of particularly vulnerable groups.

## Crucial: active participation and quality of support

Overall, the study acknowledges two crucial factors for long-term satisfaction:

1. Active participation of the beneficiaries in planning, performance and quality control.<sup>14</sup>
2. The quality of the offered services or rather the positive material benefit and effective socio-cultural changes which have been achieved as a result of the measures.<sup>15</sup>

In view of the "Listening Project", this result does not come as a surprise, as it confirms people's interest in self-determination and influence in the services offered by the NGOs. Therefore, transparency and accountability of NGOs are, in addition to real participation of the affected people in strategic decisions, the basic prerequisites to reach the goal of qualitatively acceptable and satisfactory disaster aid.

## Recommendation on the right mix of measures

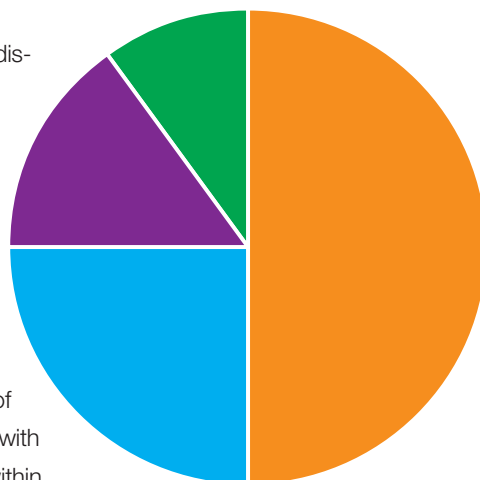
As a result of the various answers received, the research team tried to give some recommendation on the right mix and combination of the different measures. In that regard it is a central dilemma that, with regard to the high costs for house construction, only relatively few people are satisfied, but those who can are so to a very high degree. The subsequent suggestion for the use of funds in the field of disaster aid is, with respect to long-term developmental aspects, as follows:<sup>16</sup>

- House construction (40–50 %)
- Community based work including disaster preparedness and psychosocial support (25–30 %)
- Emergency relief (10–15 %)
- Income generating measures (10 %)

Development issues which are particularly relevant in the Indian context were, in addition to the assessment of various measures and in a joint effort with the affected people, also analysed within the framework of the study: for instance the promotion of justice and the essential participation of particularly disadvantaged groups, enabling also the access to state-organized welfare and emergency programmes.

## Conclusion

If we conceive disaster aid, in the sense of **"linking relief, rehabilitation and development"**, as a process leading from emergency relief to development, then "animation", in the sense of social mobilization of the affected ones, should be the methodological focus. People want to be respected in their dignity and their capability of self-determination, also after disasters. They do not want others to decide on the need they require, but they would like to decide for themselves what they are in need of. Emergency aid should not intensify the feeling of paralysed helplessness after disasters. Psychosocial support and socio-spatially anchored disaster preparedness can, within a long-term (i.e. ten or twelve years) process, lead to community mobilization and to an efficient colla-



boration between communities, the local government and other local players and thus result in sustainable transformation processes after disasters. Thus, disaster aid has an impact on women's empowerment, civic commitment, democratic participation and, finally, good government leadership.

**"Weaving Hopes after Disasters"** – how this can be achieved is the key message of the persons interviewed in the study. The people affected become successful subjects. They make use of the crisis and the aid programmes to change their society actively, and to bring about more social justice. Due to this study, impact monitoring itself became an element of the empowerment process.

➤ Peter Seidel accompanied the study „Weaving Hopes“ as Caritas Germany's desk-officer for India and Bangladesh

1 Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS); 2 The "Listening Project" interviewed more than 6.000 beneficiaries of international aid on their assessment. <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/60478/Time-to-Listen-Book.pdf>; 3 [s://www.caritas-international.de/hilfeweltweit/asien/suedostasien/indien-tsunami](http://www.caritas-international.de/hilfeweltweit/asien/suedostasien/indien-tsunami); 4 "Weaving Hopes" pages 23 and 28; 5 ibidem pages 32-33; 6 Page 64; 7 Pages 69 and 72: "It would have been better if a short study or discussion with the fishermen had been conducted before finalizing the livelihood options" (Distribution of only one specific type of nets... etc.); 8 Page 116; 9 Page 65; 10 Page 115; 11 Page 66; 12 Page 73 et seq. In the Indian State of Tamil Nadu the first-mentioned strategy was pursued, in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh (AP) the second one. Co-financing through programmes of the government constituted an additional factor of delay; 13 For instance in Bihar (page 172) and Tamil Nadu (page 168). In contrast to this, the satisfaction expressed or the subjective assessment of the relevance was very low in the earthquake region of Gujarat where disaster preparedness was only a side issue of the programmes and people didn't expect another earthquake in the near future; 14 PIME comprises planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; 15 Page 114 as well as page 50; 16 Page 122.



# Long-term Monitoring of Reconstruction Projects

## A Multi-Organizational Learning Process Initiated by Caritas Switzerland

An exciting multi-organizational learning process has taken place in Switzerland over the last three years. Reconstruction programmes in five different countries were revisited several years after their completion in order to gain more insights about their impact from a long-term perspective. Learnings were defined together and, taking the feedback received during the country visits into account, recommendations for future programmes were designed. Some of these recommendations are already being applied in current programmes. As staff worker for the organization of ebaix, the author of the article was in charge of the overall coordination

By Peter Zihlmann

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In 2013, initiated by Caritas Switzerland, four different Swiss aid organizations joined hands to analyse the long-term impact of their reconstruction programmes on the basis of a concept drafted by ebaix.<sup>1</sup> An evaluation team was to visit the once benefiting families and evaluate, by means of a questionnaire which was developed together with the aid organizations, the benefit and long-term impact of the support rendered.

Right from the start the design of the evaluations had a clear learning focus. Priority was not given to an accounting of the more or less successful measures taken, but the focus was put on the goal of learning together, from the experiences gained, something for future reconstruction projects. It was a prerequisite that, on principle, the results of the evaluations were not to be published.



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The interviews were recorded. Thus, short films were produced to all relevant issues, containing quotes of the affected people which are used for further training purposes. The film on the selection of beneficiaries can be watched online at: <https://vimeo.com/16317966>

## First pilot project on the Balkans

Reconstruction programmes, in Bosnia and Kosovo on the Balkans, initiated after the civil war, were chosen as the pilot project. These programmes dated back up to 15 years ago. The respective organizations had doubts if the benefiting families could still be found after such a long time. And if so, would they still remember details of the support provided back then?

Other critical points were the facts that the visits to the families were selected randomly,<sup>2</sup> and that some interviews should be recorded with a camera for the purpose of a subsequent know-how transfer by means of short clips. There were, also in this respect, a lot of doubts if the then beneficiaries would be willing to receive the unannounced visitors and give interviews in front of the camera.

### Affected persons have a very good memory

Already during the first country visit to Bosnia, the initial doubts gave way to great joy and fascination with the procedures.

As it turned out, the randomly selected families could still be found in most of the cases. They were not even suspicious when being visited unannounced, but on the contrary very delighted that someone was still interested in their situation after all these years. They remembered many important details, which were relevant also for future programmes, and spoke very frankly even about critical issues in front of the camera.

The core of the evaluation were interviews with benefiting families as well as with families which were not benefiting. In addition to this, village leaders and representatives of authorities were interviewed.

### Five country case studies with seven organisations in two years

After the successful pilot project in Bosnia and Kosovo, evaluation teams visited, in the following two years, more areas, in which reconstruction programmes had been carried out, in Honduras, Nicaragua and Indonesia. Three other organizations joined the four ones which had initially started the project.

<sup>1</sup> Ebaix, based in the city of Luzern, carries out evaluations, accompanies learning processes and is consultant of organizations on issues of humanitarian aid and in their connections with development cooperation; <sup>2</sup> A random selection from the beneficiary list was carried out; <sup>3</sup> In most of the country case studies Ralf Otto von Momologue was the first evaluator who decisively shaped the process methodologically; <sup>4</sup> Altogether 902 persons were interviewed in the five countries, with 556 households being visited in 127 villages and hamlets; <sup>5</sup> The "building-back-better"-approach implies that houses, which were reconstructed after an earthquake or a typhoon, will better withstand future natural disasters



In each case the evaluation team consisted of one or two members of ebaix, one external and one local evaluator, two interpreters and one or two former local co-workers of the project.<sup>3</sup> A cameraman and one person taking notes were hired additionally for the film interviews.

Each interview with the former beneficiaries lasted about 45 minutes. It was made a point to visit also remote locations or small hamlets with very few beneficiaries.<sup>4</sup> The focus of the interviews was on questions about the use and the condition of the houses as well as their extensions and maintenance. It was also monitored to what extent the “building-back-better approach”, much-debated in humanitarian aid, has really been put into practice.<sup>5</sup>

Every project visit was preceded by a one-day introductory workshop with all the organizations involved. Within these workshops, potential issues for learnings were discussed, prioritized together and a questionnaire was developed. For this purpose staff workers of ebaix, who were in charge of coordination, had researched and processed material beforehand (proposals, interim reports as well as final and evaluation reports). The most important figures and data were documented in tabular form and the reports were prepared in condensed form for those who had to travel. This material was a proper basis for a before/after comparison.

### Huge candidness due to the long-term perspective

Altogether, it became apparent that, due to the long-term perspective, the affected people were very frank. They weren't expecting any other relief effort and they were not worried to be excluded from the programme as a result of some critical feedback. That's why they could speak their minds freely. There was no self-interest, there were no power struggles, which use to occur in ongoing relief programmes and prevent a transparent flow of information. On the contrary, years after the end of the project they were frankly made subjects of discussions.

As it turned out, also the persons who were once in charge of the programme on-site, played an important role for the learning process. They could put the information gathered in the discussions into the overall context that existed at the time of the intervention.

There was only one issue they found contradictory to the concept of an open “visit to gain learnings”: the random selection of the beneficiaries for the interviews. The reasons for this objective procedure had to be explained thoroughly in order to avoid that the visit could be perceived as a “control visit”.

Another fact that proved to be quite important and appropriate was that the topics to identify potential learnings, which were defined at the initial workshops, were deliberately left open. This provided the opportunity of taking a closer look at problems arising on-site, and to include new issues into the ongoing process. Social issues on, for instance, the selections chosen or on the personal contribution requested from the benefiting families, were getting ever more important.

### Common evaluation workshops

The evaluation team presented the observations it had gained to the aid organizations at two-day final workshops. The feedback of the participants was a clear indicator that the workshops were the platform in which most of the learning process took place.<sup>6</sup> In this process the short films produced by ebaix played a vital role. They became an important instrument to communicate the observations gained on the ground.<sup>7</sup>

### Specific appliance of the learnings

The observations from the country visits were quite comprehensive. More and more trends and similarities between the different contexts became apparent in the overall assessment. Recommendations derived from these observations were formulated to each single thematic block. They shall be included in the planning of future projects.

In conclusion, the most encouraging result of the joint learning process is that some of these recommendations are taken into account in current reconstruction programmes in the Philippines and in Nepal.

*The team was divided into three groups; thus, ten to twenty households could be visited in different villages*



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## Example from the Synthesis Report on all the Five Country Visits on the Subject of **"Personal Contribution of the Beneficiaries"**<sup>8</sup>

### Initial Situation

In most projects a personal contribution of the beneficiaries was requested (for instance ways of collaboration like transport of material, demolition of destroyed building structure, entry fees etc.).

From the organizations' point of view there are numerous reasons for this. It was assumed that thus only those would benefit from the

support who were really interested, also that some collaboration would be conducive to the coping with trauma or might lead to stronger so called "ownership" which again contributed to better quality and greater use. In this way the cutting of costs and thus a greater scope were targeted.

### Result of Evaluations

Result of evaluations: In many projects the personal contributions requested led to the fact that a certain percentage of the particularly disadvantaged groups of the population, who belonged to the major target groups, were excluded. There was no family that mentioned of its own accord that the contribution requested had led to more "ownership" or trauma processing. (The personal contribution should not be mistaken for a greatest possible participation and co-determination of beneficiaries about the issues of material and design which had many positive effects). And there was no proof in any of the countries visited that the personal contribution, if compared with other ways of construction, had led to better quality or to a longer or more intensive use of the house.

The only argument in favour of participation of beneficiaries is that of the scope. Personal contribution leads to the savings of costs and thus

to the chance of involving more beneficiaries. This argument has been accepted and supported by the affected people.

In some individual projects special funds were applied to try to create exceptions for particularly disadvantaged (for instance elderly people or single mothers) in order to prevent their exclusion from the project. In other cases this was avoided with the argument that all benefiting families were poor and so differentiation was not possible.

However, quite often the exclusion of particularly disadvantaged people was not noticed by the staff. One reason for this was the "argument of interest": Poor families which could not participate were regarded as denying the interest in the project. And often the problem was not recognised because many of the affected people did not talk about these difficulties while the project was still in the stage of its performance, out of fear to lose some potential support.

### Conclusions

**1.** The concept of a project requesting personal contribution of beneficiaries can put into question or undermine the goal of reaching preferably the poorest and particularly disadvantaged.

**2.** The challenge is not to exclude the less interested or the "false beneficiaries" from the project. The challenge is to involve, or rather not lose, the poorest ones among the affected people.

### Recommendations

**1.** Decisions on project services for the beneficiaries should be made free from ideologies as far as possible. Each requested personal contribution bears the risk of the exclusion of the poorest ones among the population.

**2.** When organizations make decisions on project services for beneficiaries, special attention should be drawn to the disadvantaged social classes. Special funds for exceptions and for work in various phases over several years can be recommended. It is easier to focus on the poorest in a later phase because they become better visible then, and the pressure of aid has reduced (shortly after a disaster all people are affected equally which makes social differentiation much harder).

<sup>6</sup> After completing the Indonesia evaluation all the past participants of the workshop were questioned in written form and anonymously;

<sup>7</sup> Exemplary statements of participants of the project and of affected people could be referred directly to the organizations due to the films, and thus were more effective. The films are still being used for training purposes.

<sup>8</sup> All participating organizations were asked for permission and approved the publication of this concrete example



# How can the **Strengthening of Partners** be monitored in Reconstruction Processes?

Evaluation of organizational development of partners  
after the Haiti earthquake of 2010

For Caritas Germany working with local partners is a key principle. Their comprehensive local knowledge and decade-long experience are crucial factors for successful sustainable aid. When partners are overstretched by the dimension of a disaster, Caritas Germany sends international experts to support them. In the course of implementing the concept of reinforced impact orientation, an evaluation tried to examine if and how the principle of partnership, based on an example from Haiti, has been put into practice, and how partners were strengthened by being accompanied for years.

*By Jörg Kaiser  
and Volker Gerdesmeier*

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The carrying out of aid in Haiti after the devastating earthquake in January 2010 had been difficult right from the start. Caritas Haiti, being the local natural addressee, was itself affected severely by the quake. Not only in terms of destroyed buildings, but there were also staff workers of Caritas Haiti among the victims. Caritas organizations from all over the world poured into the country within a few days and weeks and tried to perform relief via Caritas Haiti or at least in consultation with them. In addition to a huge number of Caritas organizations, countless other aid organizations came into the country or had already been there before the quake. There was a rush on local organizations which no longer could be coordinated. Among the 250.000 victims (the figures varied between 80.000 and 320.000) there were many intellectuals and executives. A huge part of the infrastructure of the capital and the surrounding area were destroyed, in addition to many ministries, among them also central ministries - all this in a country which, even before the quake, was regarded as the poorest country of the Western hemisphere.

was to lay the foundation for further work. The programme intended to design the projects, which were chosen during the disaster phase by virtue of the situation described above, in a way that cooperation between them would be enabled and that this cooperation would result in an additional value beyond the individual projects. Herewith, Caritas Germany built upon the long-standing

tion. The other three ones were new. The programme was on a care home for disabled and elderly people (with integrated kindergarten and primary school), on a diocesan Caritas yet in the process of its establishment and on a health project.

The evaluation was based on a method of the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM).<sup>1</sup> This approach goes on the assumption that an organization in a systemic examination has to have core capabilities to persist



Staff workers of various Haitian partner organizations together with an expert sent by Caritas Germany

## The programme

To regard a disaster as an opportunity is one of Caritas Germany's precepts. It takes into account that the past cannot be reversed, but we can try to design the future constructively. In doing so, Caritas Germany is basically working according to socio-spatial orientation, which means including the local population in, as close as possible, collaboration with other players on site.

True to its vision, Caritas Germany enabled Haitian experts, under the aegis of the University of Port-au-Prince, a one-day workshop on socio-spatial orientation after the earthquake. This concept

experience it had gained, for instance, in Central and Eastern Europe, where organizations in the field of home care or youth work were strengthened, in terms of substance and structure, in such a way that they became an acknowledged partner of the government.

## The evaluation

Together with four local partners Caritas Germany's contribution to their organizational development was evaluated. One of the partners, doing youth work in Port-au-Prince, was already well-known to Caritas Germany from a previous collabora-

and further develop as an organization. These capabilities can be attributed to indicators which again can be put into questions that help to start conversations with an organization to be analysed. The consultant discusses the approach with the team.

The following core capabilities were defined together, following the initial model:

1. The capability to perform tasks
2. The capability to work outcome-oriented
3. The capability to manage the fields of financing and logistics

<sup>1</sup> [www.ecdpm.org/5Cs](http://www.ecdpm.org/5Cs)





© Ole Schmidt / Caritas Germany

*Pupils in a school in Léogâne, Haiti, which was reconstructed ... by Caritas Germany after the earthquake*

4. The capability to dedicate oneself to a cause (the organizational goal given) and to inspire employees and volunteers for it
5. The capability to build relations (to external players) and raise funds
6. The capability to adapt and renew (learning organization)

On the basis of concrete indicators, a query was produced which served as a tool to design extensive conversations of one or two days' length with the organizations selected for evaluation. In the discussion each capability was scored, by consensus, on a scale between 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good). The scoring or ranking of the respective strengths and weaknesses is, as a matter of fact, subjective. In each case there was a lively discussion on this, which forced the partners to assess themselves. This self-assessment again could be put in contrast to the external assessment from the very experienced reviewer. The results were illustrated in network diagrams which presented a proper overview of the general capability and of specific capabilities.

These illustrations were complemented by figures, data and facts, like vision and strategy papers, financial reports and the requests of the organization to further de-

velop in special fields of work. In conclusion, a comprehensive and realistic picture of an organization at one given time was gained. In presence of Caritas Germany, the reviewer presented the results to the organizations analysed. They all appraised them as a true picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Whereas all core capabilities combined allow one organization to persist and develop further, the first three ones are regarded as a prerequisite to be able to work in disaster aid.

### Results of the evaluation

It became apparent that, although the partner organizations analysed during the period mentioned, August till September 2012, had been strengthened organizationally, none of them would have been capable of performing disaster aid on their own.

One possible explanation for that was the kind of accompaniment of the aid-workers who Caritas Germany sent for support. Organization development and human resources development were not part of their core competences. Another factor was that some partner organizations turned out to be very complicated –

whatever that may mean – and, as a result of that, the foreign aid-workers took over more substantial and structural processes, instead of strengthening their self-organization. Caritas Germany had tried to counter such developments by offering consultations and trainings in human resources and organizational development, insofar as the personal capacities allowed this. But the evaluation clearly proved that there were still problems. This was painful for the colleagues sent from abroad, but they showed, to some extent, a big ability to accept criticism and made use of the results of the evaluation to reach another level of collaboration with the partners.

Another explanation can surely be found in the difficult context of Haiti. Haiti's civil society is regarded as being highly fragmented; the best organizations of the country were already bound by long-term partnership agreements. The period of the supporting phase was simply too short to stabilize partly fragile partner organizations.

It also became obvious that some of the partners (e.g. the care home) wanted to get back to their core work after the completion of reconstruction, and being

prepared for another potential disaster was not one of their priorities. In turn, there were partners (like the youth project) which, based on their experience, could have rendered even more adapted aid within the acute emergency phase. For instance, the partner within the youth project didn't want to distribute relief items, but, with more support, he could have extended his outreach social work on the streets, because the number of street-children increased as a result of the earthquake.

In all respects, there was still the need for more development in terms of the capabilities considered, as well as in terms of basic documentation, of the financial situation and of the number and qualification of staff. Caritas Germany took care of this need intensively in the subsequent period. But then, some of the partners lost eligibility of further support. They were lacking the will to use the offers of support and to work on their weaknesses.

In terms of strengthening of partners, the results of the evaluation were definitely positive. For instance, the perennial support of a young diocesan Caritas by a consultant from Brazil (who had once been director of a Caritas organization for some years) obviously strengthened the organization. Especially the basic committees were dynamic and active as a result of the trainings and were well committed to a follow-up project in the field of disaster preparedness.

## Conclusion

As for preparedness for future disasters, the results of the evaluation were not positive. So also in cases of future disasters in Haiti, the partners will be in need of support from Caritas Germany's staff.

Taking an open-minded look at the evaluation, it proved that some of the partners



Architects, Caritas staff and affected people developed the model house for the reconstruction in a joint effort

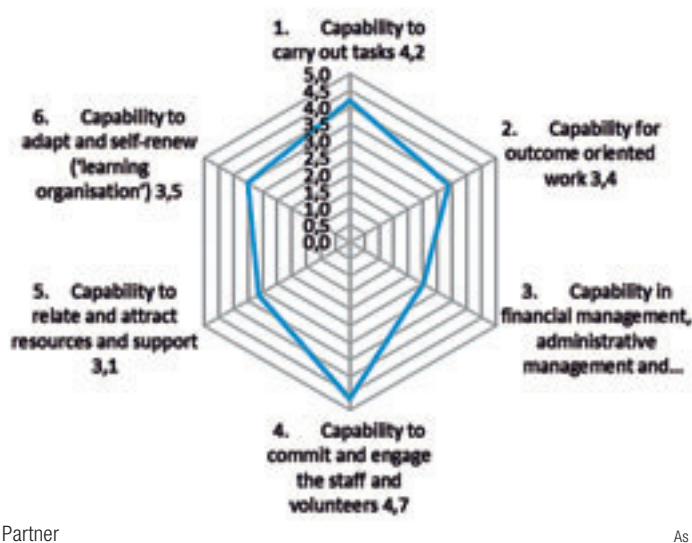
had grown with their tasks. They clearly expressed that they appreciated the supportive analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. It was not the "ranking" that mattered, but the discussion which it initiated and which allowed a criteria-based self-assessment and external assessment as well as a visually tangible overall picture of their capacities. Furthermore, it provided, to both sides, a clearer picture of how accom-

panying support should be like in the future. Unfortunately the decrease in funds hampers the urgently required accompanying processes for committed, but still fragile partners in this poorest county of the Western hemisphere.

> Jörg Kaiser supervised the aid after the earthquake as desk-officer for Haiti

> Volker Gerdesmeier is director of Caritas Germany's quality management

## Partners of Caritas Germany in Haiti



As of 2012

Evaluation report Caritas Germany, adapted to the method of ECDPM



# How can impact assessment work in the context of a violent conflict?

## A case-study

A crucial point in the concept of in-depth impact orientation was the differentiation between acute emergency relief, reconstruction, development cooperation and disaster preparedness. In acute emergency relief the priority is on immediate action. Thorough before/after-analyses to document impacts are not feasible. But it is necessary to ensure, as far as possible, that negative effects will be avoided. Especially in military conflicts the risk is high. Caritas Germany examined, within the framework of a cross-section evaluation, if and how humanitarian principles of the do-no-harm-approach and impartiality in an emergency relief project in Congo could be met. It was also examined if the actual project goal had been reached on the outcome level.

*By Birgit Kemmerling, Christoph Klitsch-Ott  
and Volker Gerdesmeier*



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Staff members of Caritas Congo inform the villagers about the aims and the benefit of the planned evaluation and about the procedures of the interviews

The historical roots of the violent conflicts in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the humanitarian crisis, which it triggered and which has been lasting now for decades, reach far back into the colonial and post-colonial era. The direct trigger of that humanitarian disaster were the destabilization of the region of the Great Lakes by the 1994 Rwanda genocide, the decline of then Zaire and the Congo wars which started in 1996. The Democratic Republic of Congo is still regarded as a fragile state and is the scene of one of the most complex and longest lasting humanitarian crises of the world. The confusing and frequently changing fronts lead to massive refugee movements and displacement in the country.

### The project area was the scene of massive violent conflicts

The project area of Kasika, South-Kivu, had been the scene of massive violent conflicts for many years. In 1998 a large massacre against civilians occurred which left severe traumas. In June 2012 the struggles between two conflicting parties resulted in the flight of around 7.000 families. They returned in September 2012 and found their villages devastated. Caritas Uvira has worked in the area for decades and requested help from Caritas Germany to reintegrate returnees.

Due to limited financing options the target group had to be reduced to 4.000 needy families returning. They received food items to bridge the time till the first

harvest, seeds and manioc cuttings, consultancy on farming and equipment like hoes etc. in order to be able to grow food on their own and improve their cultivation methods. Another goal of the project was the strengthening of the target group's self-organization. The project period was, due to financial restrictions, only six months.

### Cross-section evaluation in three countries

In 2012, Caritas Germany decided to deepen its impact orientation and to carry out a cross-section evaluation of a specific overarching issue. In 2013, the management determined the theme of "Humanitarian Aid in Violent Conflicts"; especially



the monitoring of compliance with humanitarian quality standards like the do-no-harm-approach and impartiality.

#### Key questions were:

- Relevance and selection: To what extent was the programme strategy relevant for the needs of the population? Was the selection of the target group carried out independent of ethnicity, religion etc.? Did local elites try to manipulate the selection; how were they counteracted?
- How were the project goals reached on the outcome level?
- Which intended or unintended effects could be observed? Did the projects intensify tensions or violent conflicts, aggravate or reduce them? Were there any positive or negative effects on markets? Was there an increase of dependency or was resilience strengthened?

Three countries on three continents were selected as examples; the Congo evaluation described here was one of three case-studies. The reviewer sugges-

ted the selection of an independent interpreter of the local language in order to avoid the danger of "filtering" statements of the persons interviewed. The partners agreed. On request of the partner a local co-reviewer joined.

The reviewers talked with members of the target group about the project. But they also led extensive conversations with returnees who did not benefit from the project and asked them explicitly if the criteria of selection of the target groups had been communicated to them and if they thought they were appropriate.

In addition to conversations with all the stakeholders in the area, representatives of other denominations were asked about their view of the project.

Since the time for the evaluation was before the time of harvest (due to the overall planning of the cross-section evaluation), only limited statements on yields or food security could be made. That's why an additional local self-evaluation was carried out on this aspect, which was accompanied professionally by the desk officer.

## Results

The reviewers introduced the results of the evaluation to all desk officers within the framework of one day of learning.

#### Relevance and selection of the target groups:

The results of the evaluation were largely positive. The interviewed returnees explained clearly, that the measures of the project met their major needs and that they were able to feed themselves. Everybody interviewed said explicitly, that the selection of the target groups had been transparent and had been carried out according to the needs. There were no signs of ethnic, religious or other form of discrimination.

The representatives of other denominations confirmed that Caritas had offered the same support to needy members of every local creed. There were no signs of manipulation of the target groups by local influential persons.

Limits due to financial restrictions were a problem. True, the criteria of selection had been clearly communicated to the entire population in the project area and had also been completely met in the process of the identification of beneficiaries. However, in the course of the registration of the beneficiaries it soon became apparent that there were more beneficiaries than the project could take. That's why some quarters were not visited and, as a result of that, their inhabitants felt excluded.

#### Target attainment on the outcome level:

As mentioned, the time of harvest was after the end of the project and after the date fixed for the evaluation. Therefore, the project partner carried out an additional self-evaluation, intensively supported by the desk officer. The project led to an obvious improvement of the food situation of the population. Before the start of the project many of the families could prepare only one warm meal a day, sometimes not even one. At the end of the project the majority of the families interviewed were able to prepare at least one, frequently even two warm meals a day. At the same time there were less children suffering from acute malnutrition, many of them had put on weight. The beneficiaries now had the opportunity to ensure a varied nutrition, and that is another improvement. A majority of the beneficiaries were able to sell a part of their harvest products and to buy e.g. medical drugs from the income gained.

It was difficult to measure seemingly simple issues on, for instance, the quantity of grain or the amount of income generated.



Many beneficiaries had used small amounts for personal daily consumption already before harvest time and, thus, did not have an overview of the total yield.

Many of the beneficiaries had adopted what they had learnt in agricultural training ("adoption rate"), which was assessed as being exemplary in the survey. One third of the beneficiaries had adopted the new methods taught (sowing "in line", varied planting of different kinds of seeds in order to reduce pests etc.), which can be regarded as a good result.

However, a "sustainable" improvement of the food situation could not be achieved. Many families could not store seeds for the next harvest, because acute expenses or debts forced them to use everything.

To some extent, an improved self-organization could be felt. The groups of farmers met, self-organized, to exchange experiences and for mutual consulting, even after the end of the project. It can, however, be doubted if these initiatives will continue in daily struggle for life without any external support.

## Impact

In their thorough analysis, the reviewers didn't detect any indicators of effects apt to escalate conflicts or to prolong them. There was no looting or taxing of the harvest by illegal militia. In all the villages the target groups of the project prevented envious reactions from the neighbours by sharing a part of the seeds they had received. They also cared for other needy groups, for instance recently displaced people who had fled from conflicts into the project area and who could not be offered any support from Caritas.

No negative effects on the food market or arising dependencies were identified. The cultivation products placed on the market did not lead to rising prices. The



*The families which had received seeds, tools and seedlings could improve their food situation significantly*

target groups made use of the food items received, in order to bridge a certain period of time, and of the seeds for self-production. Nobody expected a longer-term supply with relief items and reduced personal contributions. On the contrary: Many families would not have been able to sow at all without external support with equipment and seeds.

## Unexpected solidarity

The evaluation was an attempt for Caritas Congo and Caritas Germany to monitor the compliance with humanitarian standards like impartiality and "do-no-harm" with the help of a concrete example. The evaluation was designed as an independent external monitoring, with all means that were at disposal. It proves that the project did not trigger any negative effects. In the selection of target groups, the project partner, Caritas Congo, followed solely the criterion of need, independent of ethnic or religious affiliation. The fact that it has been working in the project area already for a long time and is very familiar with the socio-economic circumstances prevented potential conflicts.

Moreover, the evaluation showed one unexpected positive result which was not known to the staff before: 4.000 benefiting households living in extreme poverty developed the solidarity of supporting another 1.000 vulnerable households by sharing from what they had received. Thus, the target group actively prevented potential conflicts over the distributions. Whereas aid organizations often discuss their worry of not reaching "the very poorest" only in general and vaguely, and try to avoid this by continuous refinement of the criteria, the beneficiaries of this project demonstrated how they redistribute, of their own accord, to other people in need.

The example of this evaluation illustrates the conflict-sensitive work of Caritas Congo. The important question remains if, beyond this project, the decade-long work of Caritas Congo will contribute to sustainability, peace and reconciliation in the area. It could not be answered within the limited scope of this analysis. That would require another, more comprehensive, analysis.

➤ *Birgit Kemmerling is desk officer for Congo, Christoph Klitsch-Ott is director of Caritas Germany's Africa department and Volker Gerdesmeier is director of its quality management.*



# Impact Orientation in a Peace-building Project

## Report on a field visit

Whereas projects in long-term humanitarian aid again and again have to face the question of how to act within the context of conflict (“working in conflict”) and if they can exclude negative effects, peace-building projects (“working on conflict”) have to go beyond that. Will the self-defined goals of a decrease of violent conflicts be achieved? How can the impact be monitored?

*By Volker Gerdesmeier  
and Philipp Lang*

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We are in the Catatumbo, a region of the Departement Norte de Santander in the Northeast of Columbia to prepare an interim evaluation. Since November 2013, there is a peace process going on in Columbia which is raising hopes. The government and the country's biggest guerilla group are negotiating with inter-

2013 with the support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

We stop on a hill in a small village to enjoy the view over the green plains, stretching to the mountains of Venezuela. A young soldier is approaching and addresses us in a friendly way, as-

to the regional market is nearly impossible. The telephone network is not reliable, the way to school is too far. "Four up to five children succeed every year in going to the city to attend secondary school. But those who leave this place, never come back." The adolescents cannot see any prospects in the villages; they want to get away, even for the price of being recruited by one of the parties in the decade-long civil war.

The people here call these parties who are tormenting the population from all sides as soon as it is getting dark and the soldiers, in order to protect themselves, have to withdraw with their impressive tanks and heavy weapons, "armed players". As it is often the case in countries in which violence is ruling, the names of the violent perpetrators are not mentioned, in order not to risk any danger. But slight hints and passing remarks reveal the extent of the farmers' misery. "This evening they will ask us again what we were talking about in our assembly," one of the participants of the discussion tells us in a rather resigned way.

Twelve percent of illegal taxes have to be paid for each crate of beer transported. The prohibited growing of coca is being illegally taxed by many parties. Even the micro-entrepreneurs who possess a cell-phone and, thus, rather make ends meet (e.g. by "renting" it out for phone calls to the city) have to pay such illegal taxes. One of the basic prerequisites for a functioning state, the legitimate state monopoly on power, is massively put in question and, due to that, the population has to pay a high price.

As we leave the community, a farmer points at the road which is blotched with potholes and half destroyed by erosions. He asks the head of the social pastoral: "Father, do you really think that peace will come to us on this road?"



Caritas Germany's staff worker Friedrich Kircher in conversation with two mine victims.

national assistance. After decades of civil war and failed peace processes, scepticism remains high, but many observers speak of a historic opportunity. One thing's for sure: The implementation of the peace treaty will only succeed if there will be a change of the conditions at the grassroots level in rural areas. The social pastoral of the Church in Colombia has been providing aid to the victims of the bloody conflict (Columbia has, right after Syria, the highest number of internally displaced people). At the same time it works wherever it is possible to strengthen civil society and rural community-based development. The project we are to visit has been in process since

king us where we come from and where we are going. Are we, he is asking, aware that it might be dangerous to take that road? "Public order is complicated here," he explains with a slight expression of embarrassment. "We will be here till 6.00 p.m. to ensure security. Later the situation will change." We promise to be back in time.

### Community work during a conflict is a big challenge

A few hours later we sit together with a group of farmers. They tell us about their problems and their successes. The road is so bad that the transport of vegetables



## Participative problem analysis as a common project basis

In order to lay a foundation – also in terms of an in-depth impact monitoring – the project was preceded by an extensive problem analysis which was carried out by representatives of the local communities and indigenous people, and supported by the social pastoral and a consultant recommended by Caritas Germany.

In the course of this problem analysis the complex conflicts in the area were discussed with all the people involved. Everybody had set ambitious goals. For instance, the project should improve the democratic participation of the rural population, enable access to public financing for rural development projects and promote non-violent settling of conflicts.

“There is no one to dispense justice in our hamlets,” said a Caritas worker. “When two neighbours are arguing over a property boundary or two communities over a municipal boundary, quite often the weaker side seeks support from one of the armed actors for his concern. Thus, small arguments escalate to bloody conflicts. The communities should learn to settle the conflicts on their own.”

## An important milestone: the village development plan

Midway through the project we interviewed the target group, asking if and what they had achieved up to then. To record and document these changes is difficult for two reasons: On the one hand it is hard to consider – as it is the case in all peace-building programmes – the prevention of an escalation as an issue worthy of documentation. On the other hand this is often due to acts of moral courage, which might cause danger to the person acting if disclosed publicly. In cases like this, solutions

have to be found to record the achievement in individual interviews and to forward it in appropriate form.

A freely selected village leader tells us: “We have made progress in political terms, we are better organized. We elect and we are being elected. We designed a development plan, including priorities for the community. We present to them all the candidates running for election of the mayor and ask them to commit themselves to the development of the community.” A friend of his adds: “The trainings in which we could, thanks to the project, participate, have helped us. Please continue them. We are just beginning.”

In another community the inhabitants say that they have learned to plan the future of the village together. They would like to have a secondary school there, including agricultural vocational training, in order to prevent the youth from emigrating. They have learned to make use of the right of information (derecho de petición) to get information on possible subsidies from the State. Some members of a group of displaced women have organized themselves, fought to gain some land and a sugar cane press and are selling the juice in the city. In another village the inhabitants report how they supervise the local budget. “Before we started to do so, the mayor drafted a global budget every autumn. After that he could dispose of it as he wanted. Just have a look around: streets, water, electricity – everything is planned, but nothing is realized. Now we have a development plan and will demand that a decision on a precise budget has to be taken.

## And what about peace?

As for this delicate question, we can, in public, only make a slight hint. At the beginning of the project, those working for it intended to produce statistics of the violent



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*Villagers near Guapi – they were displaced already twice. With the help of Caritas they could return.*

conflicts in the area, in order to document the decrease of violence during the project. In spring 2015 the biggest guerilla group in the country terminated its unilateral cease fire, in spite of ongoing peace negotiations, and there are, again, more occurrences of attacks against the army and the police. Does this mean the project goal is void; has it been unrealistic right from the start? “No,” says one of the staff workers: “You have to differentiate between two levels. Our influence on very big violent conflicts is very limited and indirect. But we can reach a lot on a local level.”

## Results of the interim evaluation

In March 2016, the social pastoral, supported by Caritas Germany, carried out an interim evaluation of the project. Nine persons out of each of the eleven target communities were invited to an initial workshop. In total, 90 persons participated in the group discussions which focused on the most important changes that had taken place since the start of the project, applying the methods of “Most significant change” and “Timeline”.



### Identified effects relating to peace building ("Working on conflict"):

- The project programmes have generated a new generation of "leadership personalities". The community members confirmed an improvement of mutual trust between them and their representatives and leaders.
- The "new" leadership personalities were able to increase their influence on the local administrations. The fact that two of these personalities were, in the local elections of October 2015, elected as councillors (concejales), was, among other things, expressed as evidence for this.
- The joint drafting of community development plans and the related discussions on existing problems and potentials contributed to the drafting of a shared vision of the further development of the communities.
- Improvement of the relations to the mayors in the district. In the run-up to the elections the communities got in touch with all the mayors who were newly elected in October 2015 and presented their development plans to them. Based on this, a close collaboration

could be achieved, and the community development plans were taken into account within the planning processes on district level.

- In a specific survey the teachers of the target communities confirmed the positive effects of the peace-building measures on the ways children and adolescents dealt with each other. Overall, the level of conflict in schools showed a positive development. The parents' commitment at schools also increased.

### Restrictions in the gathering of data:

Owed to the fact that the interviews were led in the context of an ongoing conflict, it was, after weighing up potential security risks, denied to ask questions on "mechanism of peaceful conflict management" which should be established within the framework of the project. Any statement in this regard could have allowed direct conclusions about relations to the armed players, still present in the area, and thus endanger the population.

### Influence of external factors:

The interim evaluation confirms the big in-

fluence of project-independent factors on the development of conflict dynamics in the target communities. Thus, the escalation of violence in the first half of 2015 could be traced back to the problematic development of peace negotiations between the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government. Other external factors are increasing territorial conflicts about areas, from which the FARC guerrilla withdraws, and the expansion of paramilitary groups in the project area. The big influence of these factors, which are lying outside of the direct scope of the project, limits the information value of tools of impact monitoring on project level.

## Conclusion

At present, the measuring of impacts of project activities on the general level of conflict in the target communities is possible only to a very limited extent. However, on individual and on community level there was evidence of measurable effects. Summing up these "indirect" effects can lead to the conclusion that, overall, due to the project, a positive influence on conflict dynamics and a contribution to peace building were achieved.

As a whole, the interim evaluation confirmed the appropriateness of the individual project components (political education, peace education and agricultural projects). But it became apparent that networking between the respective project components will have to be reinforced in the next project phase, in order to intensify its impact in respect to the overarching project goal "Peace Building".

➤ Philipp Lang accompanied the peace building project as Caritas Germany's desk officer for Colombia

➤ Volker Gerdesmeier is director of Caritas Germany's quality management department



## GLOSSARY

**Baseline:** An analysis describing the situation prior to a development intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made (as defined by OECD).

**Code of Conduct:** The first code of conduct for disaster relief organizations, adopted in 1994 and signed by hundreds of humanitarian organizations as self-commitment.

**Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS):** The recent quality standard for humanitarian aid, adopted in 2014, comprising several already existing standards.

**Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** Systematic approach in disaster preparedness which comprises all measures of analysing the risk of natural disasters, of preventing them and of mitigating their negative consequences.

**Do-No-Harm-Approach:** A concept for conflict-sensitive planning and carrying out of relief efforts, especially in war or civil war zones.

**Endline:** Final analysis describing the changes which occurred since the baseline (see above).

**Empowerment:** The strengthening of possibilities of poor or disadvantaged parts of the population for self-reliance and participation in decisions affecting them.

**Evaluation:** Systematic and (according to common definitions) objective assessment of a usually completed project within development cooperation, humanitarian aid or some other field with the aim of taking stock and, where applicable, giving guidance of how to improve approaches.

**Focus group discussion (FGD):** Open inquiry within a small group of persons who have similar concerns or characteristics (adolescents, women, nomads etc.) and who might share their concerns not so frankly in a bigger, mixed group.

**Impact:** Positive and negative, intended or unintended long-term effect by a development intervention (OECD-definition). In humanitarian aid often defined as "lasting or significant change" (Chris Roche) in order to, for instance, emphasize the importance of acutely lifesaving measures, even when their "sustainability" is not guaranteed in the context of some conflict or a chaotic disaster situation.

**Logical-Framework-Approach:** A planning tool developed in the sixties which, based on a thorough situation- and problem analysis, aims at the optimization of the conception of project activities.

**Outcome:** Direct short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs (definition OECD)

**Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA):** A bundle of methods, mainly developed by Robert Chambers on the basis of Paulo Freire's didactics, to analyse developmental problems with and by the affected people themselves.

**Sphere Standards:** An initiative to improve the quality of humanitarian aid which was launched in 1997 and is recognised worldwide; it comprises common principles as well as four minimum standards for the fields of the provision of water and sanitation (WASH), food, emergency shelter, relief items and health.

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