Comparative Analysis of the Impact of Tsunami and Tsunami Interventions on Conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia

Executive Summary

Research Team:

- **Peter Bauman**
- **Gazala Paul**
- **Mengistu Ayalew**

Abstract

The objective of this field-based research was to assess the impact of natural disasters and disaster interventions on protracted intra-state conflicts and to provide insight for designing and implementing disaster interventions in conflict situations. The field research was conducted in Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia as a comparative analysis. The researchers chose Sri Lanka and Aceh/Indonesia because both were severely hit by the tsunami in December 2004 and have been marred by intra-State conflicts. The distinct nature and intensity of these conflicts provided a platform to observe the implementation of humanitarian assistance and identify the strengths and limitations of the tsunami interventions. The researchers interviewed various experts and officials involved in humanitarian and conflict resolution activities. The researchers also had the opportunity to observe the realities on the ground and to discuss the situation with the tsunami and war affected people.

By applying conflict resolution models and principles in humanitarian assistance this research established, among others, two major findings. First, the tsunami and the tsunami interventions had different impacts on the dynamics of the two conflicts. In Aceh/Indonesia, the major actors, GAM and the Government of Indonesia (GOI), successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) ending almost 30 years of war. Conversely, in Sri Lanka the relations between the government and the LTTE deteriorated. The research analyzes these outcomes and attempts to explore the underlying causes of this disparity. Second, in both cases, the tsunami interventions suffered from one major shortcoming. The humanitarian assistance did not reach the thousands of conflict-affected, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have been living in vulnerable conditions for many years. In addition, drawbacks including: lack of effective coordination, conflict insensitivity, low levels of participation by the beneficiaries, and undermining local capacities were observed by the researchers and identified by interviewees.

The research provided several recommendations including: innovation in fund raising processes and assessment of inflexible and inappropriate mandates, judicious conditionality on debt relief measures so as to encourage the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and cross-learning between the fields of disaster relief, development, and conflict resolution. In addition, it is vital that serious steps are taken in regard to the consideration of unique contexts, local values, and domestic realities. Also, participatory approaches should be implemented at every level of intervention. The researchers suggest that if such and similar steps are taken into account, humanitarian assistance will not exacerbate conflict situations and can help to mitigate war and contribute to resolutions of conflicts between and among diverse groups.

Due to the nature of a summary many of the intricacies and nuances will unfortunately be missing in this document. For a comprehensive discussion please contact Peter Bauman and he will happily forward a copy of the full report.

Summary of Findings

Over a period of two and a half months the research team interviewed over 100 representatives of governments, INGOs, UN agencies, bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors, the people of Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh, members of GAM, the LTTE, local NGOs and CBOs, members of civil society, war and tsunami affected IDPs, and of course, the beneficiaries. The following is a summary of our findings.

The impact of the tsunami on South-East Asia and the commendable reaction to it created hope and expectation among the international community that something positive would come out of the enormous catastrophe. Meeting these hopes and expectations, Indonesia/Aceh appears to be engaged in a fragile but successful peace process. After the disaster struck, the two parties not only signed the MoU, but also engaged in issues including Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR); political, economic, and social reconstruction, and mending the rather strained relationship between the Acehnese and the GOI. Nonetheless, much remains to be done to implement the MoU and sustain the atmosphere for, and commitment to, the peace process.

Conversely, the situation in Sri Lanka appears somewhat discouraging. Almost all efforts to reduce the level of polarization between the two parties, build confidence, and kick-start the long stalled peace process were unsuccessful. The acrimonious propaganda and the actions and gestures by both parties indicate the possibility of a relapse into war. In this respect one can mention the hawkish President Mahinda Rajapakse coming into power in the recent election. The new President, who was the Prime Minister in the last government, was against any forms of cooperation with the LTTE including P-TOMS and openly allied with the spoilers such as *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP). Certain areas in the country particularly in the east are militarized, even more than they were before the 2002 Cease Fire Agreement (CFA).

Given these conflicting scenarios, the logical questions are why and how the tsunami and tsunami interventions led to different outcomes.

In Aceh the government was militarily strong and the rebel group had already been weakened when the tsunami hit. Also, in the continuous attempt to resolve the conflict between GAM and the GOI, a series of quiet talks convened in early 2004. The tsunami further affected GAM as a number of its members lost their lives and families. Moreover, the international community used its assistance to create a push and pull factor that engaged the parties in the peace process. These circumstances made it possible to exploit the humanitarian will created following the tsunami for achieving tangible results in settling the conflict peacefully. For instance, a senior member of GAM's negotiating team stated that GAM was pressured by the international community to sign several agreements throughout the negotiation process. For example, when negotiating the role of the military (TNI) and police in Aceh, the government promised to use the remaining TNI soldiers for external threats. The interviewee stated that there were no external threats to Aceh and that if anyone attacked Indonesia it would be from the air. Thus, if the government truly wanted to defend Indonesia/Aceh they should build a bigger Navy and Air force. According to the interviewee, this dispute almost broke the negotiation process but the support, encouragement, and pressure of the international community kept GAM from pulling out. The interviewee stated that "if GAM signed the agreement then 14,000 TNI and 9,000 police would

remain in Aceh, but if GAM did not sign the agreement, it would face the wrath of the international community."

On the other hand, when the tsunami struck, Sri Lanka lacked an active peace process and the security situation had been deteriorating since the Karuna split in the LTTE. In addition, the GOSL is strong but it faces one of the most sophisticated and formidable rebel groups in the world. Moreover, the tsunami did not appear to cause major damage to the military resources of the conflicting parties in Sri Lanka. The international community's role in convincing or pressuring the parties to initiate peace talks was also minimal and ineffective.

The following major findings are based on extensive and intensive interviews, observations, and literature review concerning the execution of the disaster interventions:

- The tsunami demonstrated that the opportunities created did not necessarily lead to positive outcomes in terms of resolving conflict. The sharp contrast between the situations in Sri Lanka and Aceh is proof that mere humanitarian spirit is transient unless other subjective and objective situations are fulfilled in the realm of conflict resolution. The mere flow of tremendous amounts of assistance from the international community did not significantly change the contexts of the conflicts or the positions of the conflicting parties at least in Sri Lanka. This indicates that in situations where power and identity issues are at the center of a conflict, massive destruction, resources, and support will not necessarily bring credible incentives or disincentives nor will they bring the necessary political will for peace. As one of our interviewees put it, money cannot buy peace.

- In spite of the fact that all agencies and individuals involved in the disaster interventions suggested that coordination was important, it is evident that there was a tremendous lack of understanding and practical commitment to what and how to coordinate and at what level coordination should take place. Most importantly, the focuses of coordination efforts were primarily directed to technical aspects - the structure and mechanisms of coordination. While some reports suggest that the LTTE, the GOSL, and the INGOs in some cases attempted to implement dialogue mechanisms with affected communities, efforts to harness coordination as a means to enhance the participation of the beneficiaries and hence improve the quality and promptness of assistance to the people were insufficient. Similarly, in Sri Lanka and Aceh the disaster interventions implemented by government bodies, the LTTE and, in most cases, by NGOs were top-down. The participation of the affected people in the planning, design, and implementation of relief and reconstruction processes has been very low. In Sri Lanka, both the government and the LTTE made centralized decisions without consulting the affected population. As one critic commented, there was a tendency in the humanitarian interventions to view the affected people as passive recipients of humanitarian assistance. Therefore, the sense of ownership of the process by the beneficiaries has been minimal. The situation is not much better in regard to INGOs because they also did not adequately involve the people directly or indirectly through their representatives and local entities. Aceh experienced similar mishaps to Sri Lanka in regard to coordination. In addition, the level of participation was very low as demonstrated by, among other activities, the building of inappropriate shelter. The low level of participation might be attributed to the disregard of

the international organizations for public interest in the beneficiaries' role and to the culture of fear and intimidation which impacted on the assertiveness of Acehnese society.

- While it was encouraging to observe that the ideas and practice of peace-building has attracted local and international NGOs, IGOs, and various members of civil society, it has also been alarming that the manner it has been exercised had some negative impact. Much of the peace-building activities in Sri Lanka were ad-hoc, project-based, short-term, and non-integrated. In addition, they lacked clear objectives and few deliberate attempts were made to link the various peace-building activities with track-one and perhaps more realistic, track two peace efforts. There is a serious concern, therefore, that in a number of cases peace-building has been used as rhetoric rather than for serious and purposeful engagement. In Aceh, given the fact that the civil society has been repressed for a long time there were no significant, organized efforts in peace-building. However, conflict resolution experts have been highlighting the need to fill the gap in the Helsinki process by socializing the contents and intents of the MOU.

- The tsunami created a situation where INGOs raised more funds than governments and inter-governmental agencies. This led to situations where INGOs had a substantial amount of money without necessarily the experience, the discipline, and/or the capacity to use the funds effectively, efficiently, or in a coordinated way. Even experienced NGOs had difficulty adapting to the context especially one where they were effectively donors as well as implementers. With the multiplicity of partners working within narrow confines in several cases it appeared that some INGOs were involved in unnecessary competition to spend money without taking into account the appropriateness of their approaches and the services and goods they were providing. This financial power combined with a significant degree of freedom and a low level of accountability has, in some cases, resulted in arrogance toward local NGOs and the inappropriate and ineffective use of resources.

- The issue of mandate has been one of the major bottlenecks in the process of the disaster interventions, particularly in terms of addressing serious problems beyond the tsunami even when these problems had equal, if not worse, consequences. As a result of organizational mandates and the various strings attached to tsunami funds, agencies were obliged to limit their operations only to tsunami affected people. In Sri Lanka, the thousands of people who have been languishing as IDPs of war for over two decades and others who have been living in abject poverty rarely received direct assistance from the post-tsunami relief and reconstruction process. In Sri Lanka, it is also important to note that two thirds of the tsunami affected areas were in the north and east. Thus, a proportion of the war-affected IDPs became tsunami IDPs. This created a confusing situation for the donors, the implementers, and the beneficiaries. In some cases tsunami and war affected IDPs received assistance, in others they did not. Witnessing such a situation where their neighbors were getting support in terms of shelter, livelihoods, psycho-social assistance, etc. without giving due regard to their plight was considered blatant discrimination toward the IDPs of war. This has resulted in tension, jealousy, and frustration which creates a potential for inter and intra-group conflicts. In addition to the direct consequences of such disparity, the cleavages and grievances that discrimination causes can be easily manipulated by parties to the conflict for mobilization. In

the case of Aceh, an ancillary problem involved locating and identifying the IDPs of war as a result of government restrictions and the fear of IDPs to be exposed by registering as IDPs.

- In terms of conflict awareness, in Sri Lanka there were two categories. The first one includes organizations that have operated in the country for a long time and hence have adequate knowledge concerning the nature of the conflict. This group performed better in terms of conflict sensitivity in the design and implementation of disaster assistance. The second group, which rushed into Sri Lanka following the tsunami with very little knowledge regarding the conflict, ended up having conflict-blind programs which, in some cases, created complications and tensions between the different communities. In Aceh, those few agencies that were present prior to the disaster were aware of the conflict dynamics and were consequently able to support the peace process directly and indirectly and hence fundamentally assist its potentially positive conclusion. However, the majority of the organizations currently in Aceh rushed in primarily for disaster relief and lacked adequate knowledge regarding the dynamics of the conflict. In some cases, interviewees and reports suggest that some international workers were not even aware that there was a conflict in Aceh prior to their arrival. As a result the level of conflict-sensitivity has proven to be inadequate in the delivery of aid. Although many of these organizations have been proactive in raising their awareness, the implementation of conflict-sensitive aid is still lacking. Fortunately, this drawback has not had a major affect on the peace process. However, as the euphoric honeymoon of the signing of the MOU fades and the realities of a very slow and disjointed reconstruction process emerge, the lack of conflict-sensitivity could easily create social problems and exacerbate pre-existing issues within the communities and between the Acehnese, Javanese, GAM, TNI, local governments, and the bureaucrats in Jakarta.

- In principle, for success in such a huge disaster intervention, it is expected that smooth and cooperative relationships would be established between INGOS and CBOs, NGOs, and civil society. However, in the case of Aceh, this was not the case for two reasons. Firstly the local entities were just emerging and did not typically have adequate capacity to serve, negotiate, and work with the large international organizations. Secondly as in most cases, international organizations did not show the will to develop and/or use the capacity of these organizations and instead, at times, acted arrogantly by disregarding the potential strength of the indigenous organizations in terms of local knowledge and better access to the beneficiaries. In the case of Sri Lanka, many local NGOs were affected by the powerful and overwhelming presence of international organizations in terms of competition for beneficiaries and staff-poaching which undermined their credibility among the communities. In many cases, the manner in which international organizations disempowered local NGOs will likely exert long-term negative impact because the latter would remain with the societies while the internationals will eventually depart.

Analysis

As discussed in the section dealing with concepts, ethnic and identity-based conflicts are more difficult to prevent, manage, and resolve particularly after violence erupts. The Sri Lankan conflict should be seen in this context because the conflict between the minority Tamils and the majority Sinhalese has predominantly been manifested in violent engagement between the LTTE

and the GOSL. To complicate things further, Muslim-Tamil tensions have emerged and tensions have risen in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Therefore any conflict resolution process should take into account and address the degree of ethnic polarization and the intensity of the conflicts between and among these communities. The LTTE has been effectively controlling a large portion of Sri Lanka as a *de facto* government with its own army, police, and judiciary units. Nevertheless, the LTTE was nervous following the break up of its eastern command led by Karuna, a situation that could be exploited by the government. Since Karuna's rebellion, the Vanni LTTE has accused the GOSL of supporting his forces – thereby prosecuting a proxy war of sorts against them. Thus, although the fragile Cease-Fire Agreement had been in place since 2002, all indications prior to the tsunami suggested that the LTTE was preparing to return to war.

The last time the two conflicting parties distanced themselves from the peace process was in 2003 after the LTTE presented a proposal on an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) as a discussion point while the government put a condition to discuss that proposal only as part of negotiations on a final/permanent solution.

The conflict in Aceh is characterized as a vertical conflict between GAM and the GoI. Most analysts remark that the conflict was based on the claim that, in the pre-independence era, Aceh was a separate entity with a distinct culture, language, and interpretation/practice of Islam. When the state of Indonesia was formed the people of Aceh were not consulted properly and were excluded and neglected by the new government. The Acehnese became frustrated because they had fought off colonization for centuries and had, in fact, even fought for Indonesian independence. Then, once Indonesia gained its independence, as many Acehnese would say, they were colonized by Indonesia. These grievances were further compounded by the exploitation of natural resources by the subsequent governments and the centralization of power by Jakarta which further threatened Aceh's autonomy.

From May 2003 until the tsunami, Aceh was under military control and few outside parties were allowed to enter. The two years of marshal law/civil emergency impacted on all of the parties including the GoI. During this period not only was GAM physically weakened by the TNI but it was also significantly alienated from the people of Aceh, who had been their ideological and economic support bases. The GoI and TNI were also war-fatigued and realized that they would not be able to completely destroy GAM militarily. In addition, besides the economic loss caused by the war in Aceh, the GoI was involved with several other intra-state conflicts. Realizing that military force would not resolve the conflict, prior to the tsunami the GoI was engaged in quiet talks with the exiled GAM leadership.

With this background, one can examine how the tsunami and the subsequent interventions impacted the conflicting parties with the objective of understanding the context of the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Aceh and identifying possible factors for changes in the attitudes and positions of the actors involved.

In Sri Lanka, the physical damage caused by the tsunami to both parties' military strength was fairly insignificant. However, the level of destruction and the major task of tsunami recovery were considered as factors averting another imminent cycle of war. Beyond that, the tsunami and

its interventions did not create a situation that would either convince or oblige the two parties to go back to the negotiation table. The failure of P-TOMS (a joint mechanism) was anecdotal proof that the positions of the parties were as polarized, if not more so, than before the tsunami. Almost immediately after the tsunami, both sides wanted control over the use of international funds and thus mobilized grievances on issues of unequal distribution and discriminatory access to and participation of certain groups. As a result, the aid process became politicized and manipulated by political and/or ethnic entrepreneurs and thereby served as a divisive factor between and among communities. Therefore, whatever humanitarian will and associated sense of cooperation that prevailed was short-lived. Both parties quickly resorted to the rational calculation of their positions and the potential impact of any move toward or away from a peace process. In short, the impact of humanitarian assistance was limited to strictly relief-focused cooperation at local levels and was not exploited to contribute towards minimizing the gaps between the parties, let alone, to resolving the conflict.

In Aceh, the destruction caused by both the tsunami and earthquake had an enormous impact both physically and psychologically on GAM, TNI, the GoI, and the people of Aceh. There are no exact figures on the actual death toll of government forces and GAM fighters but it was reported that both sides suffered significant losses. It is estimated that over 150,000 people were killed and 500,000 people were displaced by the tsunami. As a result of these losses both to their forces and the civilian population each side demonstrated a sense of humanitarian obligation to stop fighting in order to get involved in the relief operations. The GoI, due to economic difficulties, did not have the capacity to rehabilitate Aceh without the support of the international community. Prior to the tsunami, as witnessed by their engagement in a series of quiet talks, both sides had realized that the military option would not resolve their conflict. Therefore, both sought an opportunity to find a political solution, but lacked an exit strategy. The tsunami provided the space necessary for the international community to harness the opportunity by formalizing the negotiation process. At the track-one level, several international actors provided sticks and carrots to support and maintain the five successful rounds of talks culminating in the MoU of 15 August 2005. Also the presence of the international community which significantly restrained the violent engagement of the two parties gave a sense of security to the people on the ground particularly in the tsunami affected areas.

According to Zartman, parties resolve their conflict only when they are ready to do so. This occurs when they run out of other alternatives, implying the impossibility of achieving decisive victory or the ability to continue engagement in protracted conflict. Only when there is a *ripe moment* do conflicts become amenable to resolution and such a moment is recognized or perceived by the parties in terms of a *Mutually Hurting Stalemate* (MHS). Other pertinent issues include the idea of commitment and grievance. In Zartman's opinion the balance between the two determines the chance for the parties to the conflict, particularly the insurgents, to engage in settlement negotiations. For example, in situations where the level of commitment outweighs the importance of grievance, there is a possibility that the rebels will opt to continue fighting even if the level of grievance decreases.

In Sri Lanka, although there has been a stalemate for quite a long time, there was no indication that either party perceived the stalemate to hurt them. To the contrary, as mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the parties, particularly the LTTE, was ready to return to fighting had it not been for

the tsunami. Given this situation, a *ripe moment* did not materialize when the tsunami hit and the disaster interventions did not significantly contribute to the emergence of one. Related to this, no MHS associated with an "impending past or recently avoided catastrophe" perceived by both conflicting parties in Sri Lanka existed. This was abundantly clear when the two parties failed to successfully implement even on very minimal humanitarian cooperation issues and mechanisms, for example (P-TOMS).

According to Zartman, conflicts, when treated "early," are more likely to engender the conditions for a MHS. In Aceh, the quiet, pre-tsunami talks between the GoI and the exiled GAM leadership could be considered as early treatment. Regarding MHS, one can mention that although TNI managed to significantly undermine the military capacity of GAM, the government was convinced that it was not going to permanently resolve the conflict through force. In the same token, GAM understood that it could not achieve its objective according to its current insurgency and the leadership realized that more severe damage to its military and political operations was imminent. Thus, the perception of a MHS and a *Mutually Enticing Opportunity* (MEO) created by the humanitarian spirit following the tsunami emerged thus nurturing a ripe moment. To complement this agreement, the presence of the international community has served as a guarantee significantly alleviating GAM's sense of insecurity, an often critical barrier to the negotiated settlement of intra-state wars.

Peace-building in a deeply divided society with armed conflict is profoundly challenging. It therefore requires comprehensive approaches that address structural issues, social dynamics, and the necessary infrastructure for a resilient and sustained peace process. According to Lederach's model, regarding the actors and approaches to peace building, there are three levels of leadership, top, middle and grassroots, which should be targeted using different approaches or intervention mechanisms. Lederach's conclusion is that the middle level of leadership is critical because it has the qualities and capacities to influence both the grass-root and top level of leadership and hence serve as a source of practical, immediate action that can sustain long-term transformation.

In Sri Lanka, all of the elements to Lederach's pyramid were present. For example, at the track-two or middle level several prominent academics in the field of conflict resolution interacted with religious, humanitarian, and ethnic (Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims) leaders. At the grassroots level, a variety of NGOs and CBOs engaged in multiple peace-building activities. At the track-one level the Norwegians have been facilitating the peace process. However, in spite of the enormous presence of individuals and institutions at the middle level, ethnic and political divisions among these mid-level actors impinged on their ability to bridge gaps between conflicting parties. In addition, the mid-level actors were unable to support grassroots efforts significantly because they were by-and-large Colombo-centric. Substantial competition and friction between the different players existed at each level contributed to the ad hoc nature of most peace-building efforts and their disintegration without significant results at the macro and community levels. As per the recommendation of a group of renowned scholars, strategic alliances should be formed to engage all political actors as a critical mass of agents of change within Sri Lankan society.

As evidenced by the current peace process, the interaction in Aceh has been solely at the track-one level creating the expression of mass concern regarding the exclusion of the mid-level and grassroots actors. This dilemma continues as the DDR is being implemented without significant popular participation. While substantial enthusiasm exists at the grassroots level and among the multitude of emerging NGOs and CBOs, the latter apparently lack the capacity and unity of purpose to have a significant impact on the peace-building and reconciliation in Aceh. Therefore, in order to ensure the sustainability of the peace-process, the greatest need as expressed by many interviewees and analytical reports is to build the capacity of local governance and civil society.

Mari Fitzduff's Meta-Conflict approach could have been applied in both conflicts using the opportunity created by the tsunami. According to this approach, Sri Lanka could have addressed subjective issues such as negative attitudes of different communities among each other, the broken and strained relationship between and among the various actors in the community, and the history of animosity, suspicion, and violence. On the objective or structural side, the tsunami was an opportunity to formulate the relief and reconstruction interventions while also addressing the conflict. Politically a chance emerged to form a national government uniting the two major southern parties and representatives of Tamils and Muslims. In line with this, constitutional issues on power-sharing and devolution of power or federalism could have been addressed. However, most of the approaches employed following the tsunami were ad-hoc and reactive. In addition, the opportunity to implement comprehensive, multi-sectoral interventions with long-term vision was missed leaving the country as or more divided than before the tsunami.

In Aceh, the conditions prior to the tsunami inhibited any type of psycho-social or structural interventions. The tsunami dramatically changed this dynamic providing a great opportunity to address both the psycho-social and structural dimensions of the conflict. Psychologically, the mere presence of international agencies in Aceh forced the government and GAM to change their attitude and behavior towards each other. The signing of the MOU, the successful process of DDR, and the beginnings of a self-governing Aceh provide significant evidence that the tsunami and the tsunami interventions were factors in some major structural changes. Several international agencies were fundamental for the successful implementation of the above processes. In addition, the creation of the BRR as a decentralized and participatory model that includes a serious focus on transparency and the eradication of corruption, reflects significant change. In regard to building trust and reducing animosity, the social fabric of Aceh has been torn, thus there is strong fear and distrust between GAM, TNI, and the communities affected by war. There have been some cases in which the tsunami interventions contributed to mending relations, however, if the current peace holds, the process of reconciliation will take years. Preliminary discussions are taking place related to possible challenges to the DDR process, i.e. the reintegration of GAM, as well as longer term reconciliation work, which includes justice, human rights, and the future role of the military and police in Aceh. The reconstruction process in Aceh has been very slow and the international community has rarely deviated from tsunami related work in order to engage in peace-building endeavors. However, as the reconstruction and peace process continue it appears that several organizations are interested in engaging more directly in activities that will support the peace process.

Conflict Sensitivity

This section assesses the application of conflict sensitivity by different agencies in their disaster interventions in Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh. For this purpose the eight principles identified by Barron e*t al.* are used.

Perceived equity in targeting:

In Sri Lanka, many agencies failed to account for issues such as ethnic and religious cleavages and the issue of diversely affected populations such as IDPs of war, people living in abject poverty, and people affected by the tsunami. As a result, especially during the initial period, the eastern and northern provinces complained that the south was getting more assistance at their expense. Interviews and observations disclosed various grievances concerning the favoring of one ethnic community over another. For instance, Muslims and Tamils complained about the discriminatory approaches of some of the governmental and non-governmental agencies. Most importantly, there was a strong grievance expressed among the thousands of IDPs of war that the relief and reconstruction processes targeted only tsunami-affected people without giving due regard to their dire situation.

In the case of Aceh, particularly in the beginning, agencies providing aid had to be extremely cautious of who and where they worked because of the very strict conditions given by the GoI. As a result of these restrictions, the areas suspected of supporting GAM did not receive the same attention from humanitarian aid agencies. In addition, there were no-go zones in areas where high levels of tension and violence between GAM and TNI remained. Most of these areas are scattered throughout the mountainous interior region. For these reasons, along with other issues including organizational mandates and security matters, the distribution of aid targeted only tsunami-affected people and those areas which were easily accessible. In addition, those areas along the coastal belt that are far from Banda Aceh and less accessible did not appear to be receiving equitable services.

Community driven approaches:

The objective of applying community driven approaches is to empower the communities and create a sense of ownership. This will also have a positive impact on the appropriateness of interventions and sustainability of the results.

In Aceh, while there were some reports of international organizations applying community driven approaches, this aspect of the reconstruction process has been deficient. As a result, much of the aid delivered has been inappropriate. For example, the barracks (temporary houses) built for the affected people were designed in such ways that were insensitive to the people of Aceh. This resulted in not only enormous wastes of time and resources but also distrust and frustration among the local communities. There has also been lack of communication between international organizations and the affected communities. For example, in many instances unrealistic promises were made raising the expectations of the affected people. When the aid was not delivered as promised, explanations were not provided directly to the people. Interviews with the affected population suggested that they were confused about when, where, and why projects stop and

start. As a result, the affected population expressed higher comfort levels with the local NGOs because they had a greater understanding of the cultural nuances and encouraged the people to participate in the process. In fact, several of the local organizations have employed people affected by the tsunami, which provides greater empathy and understanding. The BRR has encouraged INGOs to employ and work with locals as it attempts to transform the typical top-down paradigm to a flat, community-driven, participatory approach.

In Sri Lanka, although a number of existing community organizations are capable of articulating the interests of the people, the GOSL, LTTE, and the INGOs did not try to involve these organizations of the local population in designing, implementing, and monitoring programs, for example, concerning shelter and livelihood, in a sufficient fashion. Thus, in most cases, communities and individuals were considered as passive recipients of aid. This disempowerment nurtured dependency, complacency, and the distribution of inappropriate qualities and quantities of aid. The beneficiaries have indicated that they did not know what, when, or how delivery of aid, including shelter, were assessed and implemented. In short, due to the lack of consultation with the local, affected and non-affected populations, an important missing link exists in the overall response strategy. In such situations, decisions were made with potentially important, long-term ramifications. These decisions were highly centralized and based on limited knowledge of the local conditions on the ground. The GOSL, LTTE, donors, and INGOs share responsibility for this.

Focus on processes as well as outputs:

In both Sri Lanka and Aceh, the humanitarian assistance was mostly donor-driven and result-oriented, and therefore did not take into consideration popular views and preferences. I.e, How many houses can and should be constructed by the end of a stipulated time? But in any such situation there has to be a process involved in getting to the end product. The processes are important because they take into consideration the needs of more vulnerable groups including: children, women, and the disabled, and possibly affect intra-and/or inter-community relationships. The majority of the reconstruction efforts have been project-focused, lacking consultation with the affected populations.

Build-in complaint mechanisms:

This principle is meant to offer people the opportunity to voice their concerns and grievances on both the process and outcomes of the intervention mechanisms. When implemented well, it is helpful for both the beneficiaries and the agencies because it can improve efficiency and satisfy the needs of the people while protecting their interests. However, it is not enough to have such mechanisms unless the people know that they exist. Moreover, if grievances are addressed then their resolution and the end results of the resolution should be known to the people and the affected parties.

In Sri Lanka, a gap has surfaced regarding complaint mechanisms and hence the UNDP supported a process to assess the people's opinions concerning the relief and reconstruction interventions. This process started very late and it did not address the specific interventions implemented by each organization. In addition, the process appears to be intermittent rather than

long term and fluent. Observations and interviews disclosed that the beneficiaries did not know to whom to report their complaints and no mechanism was clearly advertised and utilized by INGOs to ascertain popular grievances. As a result a number of beneficiaries complained about the quality and appropriateness of the interventions.

In Aceh, while complaint mechanisms have been implemented by individual INGOs there did not appear to be an advertised, accessible, and uniform way for beneficiaries to express their wishes or views. This has created a major problem because it affects the quality and pace of the reconstruction process. The affected people were confused as to whom they should go to for addressing insufficient and inappropriate services. Also, several INGOs expressed a need to develop better mechanisms for communicating with each other, particularly across sectors. For example, if a complaint regarding health concerns was stated to a representative from the housing sector, it might never reach the correct person responsible for the issue. Also, there did not appear to be links of communication between INGOs, IGOs, and local NGOs. For example, one village leader remarked that an INGO had promised houses for the village three months ago. When the representative of another INGO received this information, he was confused as to how to address this matter.

Focus on ensuring transparency and accountability:

Transparency and accountability are critical because they contribute to the prevention of corruption, misunderstanding, and false expectations. They also help to instill a sense of responsibility among the governments and agencies engaged in humanitarian assistance.

In Sri Lanka, a lot of money came from private individuals and overseas donations. This, combined with the lack of an internationally agreed upon framework for implementation and the formation of an oversight body to monitor compliance, allowed the INGOs to carry out their operations without being screened by an expert body. In addition, the INGOs did not have to develop any kind of modus-operandi to work with the GOSL or parallel bodies. If the GOSL had a sufficient mechanism for overseeing and enforcing specified standards, technically, with enough capacity and will, greater regulations could have been placed on the massive number of INGOs in Sri Lanka.

The lack of such a mechanism resulted in a situation where some of the agencies provided inappropriate and/or poor quality products. For example, in many instances the wrong kind/size of fishing nets, low quality, culturally insensitive housing, and duplicate resources were provided. Because of the blatant lack of a system for accountability there were no checks and balances on the humanitarian agencies' implementation of aid. This, combined with unprecedented amounts of funding and limited time frames, has caused unnecessary problems between agencies and uncomfortable conditions for the affected people.

During a visit to Salli village, an IDP camp, the researchers observed an encouraging beginning to a system of accountability and transparency. The donor and the implementation body had a board displaying the activities to be done in that camp with the budget for each of the line activities and the amount spent on each.

In Aceh, much of the information discussed above could be equally applied particularly in regard to the lack of screening of services delivered and the resulting inappropriate or inadequate services rendered. An additional issue has developed due to the slow process of reconstruction. Many members of the affected community indicated that they did not know enough about how the tsunami money was being spent. This generated suspicion and distrust in the GoI as well as the international community. While the BRR was attempting to set up new guidelines for accounting to help crack down on corruption, there are not enough mechanisms to provide the beneficiaries with information regarding how much and where money is being spent.

Many respondents also argue that the international community was more interested in sharing its information with their overseas donors than with their beneficiaries. That stated that several agencies were seeking ways to implement mechanisms that would help to improve systems of transparency and accountability to the beneficiaries. These mechanisms are very similar to the displays of activities and budgets discussed above in Sri Lanka. But, while these information boards have been helpful for the individual community, many suggested a need to improve this system by implementing a more macro level program perhaps through the media.

Use of independent civil society:

A strong and independent civil society is very important both to articulate and defend the interests of the affected people and to serve in the planning and implementation of disaster interventions by INGOs and the government. Local civil societies often have both technical know how, and the experience and knowledge on the context of the conflict. Therefore, they can be instrumental in making humanitarian assistance conflict sensitive. Moreover, civil society's decision making has a strong element of flexibility that the state sector often lacks. Both the NGOs and INGOs could exploit the elements of civil society to enhance the overall process of designing and implementing humanitarian interventions.

In Sri Lanka, the civil society played a tremendous role in the first weeks of the disaster. However, due to factors including the political nature of some of the civil society, the neglect of both the government and the NGOs, and the fractured nature of the overall system of civil society in Sri Lanka, they were not optimally used in the disaster and reconstruction processes. There is an encouraging attempt by the Foundation for Coexistence, Sewa Lanka foundation, and the National Anti-War Front to develop a network of civil societies in order to increase their contribution in the post-tsunami interventions.

In Aceh, the potential of the civil society has been under-utilized by the international actors in several major areas that were necessary for implementing conflict sensitive aid, particularly in regard to the nuances of the Acehnese culture and the conflict dynamics between GAM, TNI, the GoI, and the people of Aceh. In addition to cultural and conflict sensitivity, Aceh's civil society can provide local knowledge which is helpful for reaching places that are either unknown to or inaccessible to the majority of the international actors. Unfortunately, many international agencies explained that the lack of capacity and potential association with GAM has deterred them from working closely with many local NGOs and CBOs. Despite the suffering of civil society caused by marshal law, there are indeed many very capable and qualified local NGOs and CBOs. Since the tsunami, numerous civil groups have emerged; however, they do not appear

to be connected. Thus, one of the difficulties for the international community was determining which organizations were legitimate, capable, and non-political. One of the other major issues was the poaching of qualified staff and the subordination of local NGOs by INGOs because they were not given full ownership of the process. Instead the local NGOs were simply used to implement the programs created by INGOs.

In addition to local NGOs many highly capable and active individuals and groups in Aceh are involved in human right advocacy, peace/conflict resolution research, and women's rights issues. Although some international organizations are utilizing these resources, they are not being fully capitalized on. Their involvement is essential for the success of the reconstruction and peace processes.

Including the government at different levels in planning and implementation:

In most, if not all cases disaster intervention agencies would eventually like the local and provincial governments to be responsible for the relief and reconstruction operations in the respective country. It would be advisable, thus, to involve the government through its agencies at various levels in the planning and implementation processes of disaster interventions. This would help the government to make sure that, among others issues, environmental protection, inter-community harmony, and people-to-government relationships were not negatively affected by projects. However, if central, provincial and local government agencies are involved in disaster relief and reconstruction processes, it is important that their work is in accordance with, among others, international human rights laws, Sphere Standards, and the Principles of Internally Displaced People. In Sri Lanka, the government's role was limited by-and-large to providing information such as lists of beneficiaries, the allocation of land, and to rather ineffective coordination efforts. In terms of the "Buffer Zone" and other major decisions, the central government was fully involved in policy development and procedures for managing recovery. In such cases the centralization was problematic. While there have been some encouraging attempts at district levels where NGOs, INGOs, and the government agencies have tried to work together, more cross consultation and cooperation between government agencies and INGOs would be beneficial to relief and reconstruction processes.

In Aceh, due to the conditions prior to the tsunami and the heavy-handed nature of the government, there were many restrictions placed on international agencies. While the signing of the MoU and the presence of the EU-ASIAN, AMM has provided a lot of space for the international community, the GoI continues to act in an authoritative fashion. At times this has created an awkward dynamic, particularly because many of the international organizations entered Aceh with the perception that it was a failed state and thus acted accordingly. In reality, although highly corrupt, the GoI remains a functional bureaucracy that must be informed of any international presence and the work that international bodies are undertaking. Almost all organizations were restricted to the tsunami reconstruction effort. However, several organizations that developed a positive rapport with the GoI have been able to engage in the conflict situation in various ways including DDR.

Working directly with the government engenders pros as well as cons. The bureaucratic level is notoriously high, contributing to very slow processes and extreme frustration. The benefit is the

sustainability of both the organizations' presence in Indonesia/Aceh and the projects themselves. It is most likely that the majority of the agencies working in Aceh will have to leave within the relatively near future and thus any project in which the government is not invested may likely be discontinued. By including the GoI in the process, one can achieve buy-in while also building rapport. In addition, many reports and interviews suggest the need to improve both the institutional capacity of the GoI as well as the people's trust in its capacity. By avoiding working with the GoI, this opportunity to develop its institutional capacity as well as its relationship with the people is lost.

Providing support to the field staff:

The field staff play a crucial role in humanitarian intervention because they work directly with the beneficiaries and hence their input is critical in identifying needs, complaints, and concerns of the affected people and the stakeholders involved as well as in effective and appropriate implementation of the interventions. Thus, the field staff should get adequate and continuous support in terms of building their capacity to provide contextual/conflict sensitive aid. In this regard, in Sri Lanka, there have been attempts to develop resource materials in conflict-sensitivity and in organizing workshops and training for the INGO staff at different levels. However, there are visible gaps in actual practice.

In Aceh, the terrain for field staff was neither glamorous nor easy to navigate. On top of thirty years of war, the level of destruction created by the tsunami is enormous. Field staff working in Aceh must be aware of security issues related to GAM and TNI, while at the same time remaining on good terms with the government bodies. In addition, with the current developments in the peace process, the conditions for working in Aceh are continuously changing. This context makes supporting field staff an imperative. Many local members of civil society, NGOs, and CBOs said that many of the staff came to Aceh with very little knowledge of the context or culture of Aceh. In many instances, this included the leaders of the organizations. Therefore, the learning curve has been steep for most of the international agencies. Several of the major organizations explained that they were providing training, support, and protection for their staff to the best of their ability, but they also suggested that the best training and protection one could have was the acquisition of local knowledge and the experience of working in conflict environments.

To summarize there is a growing awareness of the need to become conflict-sensitive in the planning, design, and implementation of humanitarian intervention. For instance, in Sri Lanka, the donor community developed a set of *Guiding Principles* for relief and recovery. The objective of these principles was to highlight the need to take into account issues of equality, the prevention of corruption, peace-building, environmental concerns, and the participation of the people in the planning and implementation of the reconstruction processes. However, in regard to practical applications, the monitoring of and actions taken toward the correction and mitigation of the problems created because of the existing and created gaps has been minimal. As a result, the issue of conflict sensitivity and the idea of *Do No Harm* were more rhetoric than applied principles.

Recommendations

Sri Lanka and Indonesia/Aceh provided the researchers testing grounds for applying several theories and principles of conflict resolution and development/humanitarian assistance. The intricacies and challenges of providing humanitarian assistance in conflict situations should be quite evident from the preceeding summary and analysis. One of the major conclusions that emerged from the research was that the magnitude of assistance did not necessarily lead to sustainable and effective solutions. Therefore, as much as, if not more than the level of assistance, the manner of delivery and the context in which it has been designed and implemented should be recognized as having dramatic impact on disaster relief, development, and conflict resolution. Having said this, the researchers make the following recommendations to help guide current and future humanitarian work in conflict situations and to provide direction for future research.

Disaster Management Plans:

All indications in the two countries underscore the mandatory need for proper early warning and disaster preparedness systems to successfully deal with huge natural calamities. It has been commented that countries with disaster preparedness systems with effective structures reacted better to such calamities and minimized the negative impacts.

Fund Raising:

The funds raised by private sources in response to the tsunami were greater than those allocated by the government. These funds raised by INGOs were ear-marked for the tsunami-affected population. Future fund-raising and resource allocation efforts should be creative and flexible so that such inter-related problems could be handled in a holistic and comprehensive way. This should at most avoid and at least reduce the tensions and possible conflicts among these communities. In addition, such funds should also be available for overall development plans for communities in the affected areas in order to ensure a sustainable impact both at a community and possibly at the macro level.

Conditional Debt Relief:

To force governments in disaster and conflict-affected countries to use resources both for development and peace efforts, the international community should put conditions on recipients to create plausible development and conflict-mitigation projects before they waive or reduce bilateral and multi lateral debts. These will complement relief, reconstruction, and peace processes, and prevent the diversion of funds into military activities.

Adapting to Domestic Contexts:

Based on the drawbacks observed in the course of this research, it is recommended that international actors should be aware of the need to adapt concepts in conflict resolution and development works to local culture, language, and psychological make–up of the society in which they intend to work. In addition, they should not attempt to transplant concepts, approaches, and programs that were used in other disaster situations with different contexts. For instance, an approach or mechanism used by a UN agency in Afghanistan or Somalia should not

be replicated in Sri Lanka or Aceh without due consideration and adaptation. This requires attention by the international community in conjunction with the widely recommended requirement of understanding the context of a particular country.

Impact on Local Values:

It should be taken into account that short-term objectives of facilitating or expediting relief or reconstruction projects can have negative impacts on the values and discipline of the affected community. For instance, it has been observed that less meticulously planned "cash for work" programs have affected the work ethic of communities and eroded their local coping mechanisms. Such approaches also affect the practice and convictions of people in working for the community cause and hence they often begin to calculate their participation in terms of material benefits instead of the humanitarian ethics of helping one's neighbor.

Cross–Learning:

For effective coexistence and conflict resolution, development work should be viewed as an integral component of any intervention. Therefore, in as much as development interventions are advised to be conflict-sensitive, the conflict resolution analyst/practitioner should also be conversant with concepts and practices of development. This reflects the need for a substantial increase in cross-learning and cooperation between researchers, practitioners, and agencies in the two fields.

Contingency Plans:

The final recommendation deals with the need for contingency plans in peace efforts/processes. In post-tsunami Sri Lanka, a lot of attention and discussion was focused only on the establishment of a joint mechanism between the GOSL and LTTE. When that process failed, frustration and disillusionment followed, and because there was no theoretical or operational contingency plan, a vacuum was formed. As a result, immediately following the failure of P-TOMS, the hope and anticipation of peace turned into the fear and suspicion of the return to war. The international community and others concerned with peace in Sri Lanka should have simultaneously invested in community level conflict-mitigation and peace-building work to minimize the dangers of failures at the track-one level. On the other hand, there has been a degree of euphoria in Aceh due to the success of the track-one level peace agreement between the GoI and GAM. However, even though it does not appear to be the case, the leadership of both parties as well as many members of Acehnese and Javenese civil society suggested that the failure of this peace process, the third attempt at a negotiated settlement, would result in a long period of protracted war. Despite this concern, if the MoU faces some serious challenge, there does not appear to be any contingency plans to prevent the fragile peace process from total collapse and return to war.

Research Team Bios

Peter Bauman completed his Bachelors degree in Psychology from the College of Charleston in 1997. He participated in two independent studies focusing on Interpersonal Processes and Economic Psychology at Rijksuniversiteit in Groningen, Netherlands. He also attended a seminar in Dubrovnik, Croatia discussing the Transformation of War. In 2003, Peter completed coursework in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley and in February 2006 he completed his Masters Degree in Inter-communal Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis University. Peter's scholar-practitioner mentality and adventurous nature have enabled him to work in a variety of capacities throughout the world. He taught ESL in Taiwan, worked as a live-in, direct care, behavioral specialist for severely disturbed youth in Atlanta, GA, instructed high school students participating in experiential education programs in Israel, and provided assistance to Lebanese refugees and other vulnerable populations. When the 2nd Intifada erupted, Peter returned to the United States with the dream of starting an adventure program for youth in conflict. For four years Peter trained and instructed for the North Carolina Outward Bound School. By partnering *Outward Bound* and *Breaking the Ice* Peter's vision and design of an Outward Bound Program for youth in conflict came to fruition. The first ever Palestinian/Israeli Outward Bound Unity program was implemented in August 2005. This vision led to the formation of a Global Leadership Program being implemented by *Outward Bound International* and the *Global Leadership Network*. Peter has also designed and facilitated team-building, leadership, and conflict resolution programs for corporate groups and organizations. Some of his previous clients include: Cisco systems, Capital One, Boston College MBA, Intel, and the Santa-Clara Multi-cultural club. Peter also designed and facilitated experiential leadership and teambuilding workshops for the *AMIDEAST Cyprus Conflict Management Training Program*. Currently Peter is working as a consultant assisting the leadership at the *World Conference of Religions for Peace* in the development of Inter-religious Councils in Iraq, Sudan, and Palestine/Israel and in September 2006 he is planning to participate in *Do No Harm* impact assessments in Africa and India for *Collaborative for Development Action Inc* (CDA).

Mengistu Ayalew has an MA degree in International Studies and rich experience both in diplomacy and administration. His last diplomatic post was to the Ethiopian Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya where he served as a Counselor handling bilateral issues and multilateral matters in the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-HABITAT). He has direct experience in the peace processes conducted under the aegis of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) which led to peace agreements among the warring parties in Somalia and the Sudan. He has participated in various international and regional conferences including in drafting regional instruments such as the *Nairobi Declaration on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region*. Mr. Mengistu has conducted extensive researches in peace processes and post conflict reconciliation issues as part of his official diplomatic duty and for academic purposes. Mengistu completed the MA program in Inter-communal Coexistence and Conflict at Brandies University in February 2006.

Gazala A. Paul was a program officer for Oxfam UK from 1993 to 1999. Her focus was the development of programs on gender and livelihoods in the Gujarat and Rajasthan regions. In 1999 she co-founded Samerth, an India-based NGO created to regenerate the livelihoods of the people living in desert regions and to relieve the suffering. The organization evolved into a humanitarian relief and development organization. Under Gazala's direction Samerth provided humanitarian relief during several disasters in India. She managed the development of interventions for earthquake relief and rehabilitation after the Gujarat earthquake occurred in 2000. In 2002, Gujarat witnessed inter-communal riots. Gazala initiated and led Samerth's massive relief operation including: immediate food security, health and sanitation, medical care, psycho-social intervention and special care for women and children. After the immediate relief, Gazala instituted a rehabilitation plan designed to restart livelihoods via education and social reconciliation with the re-establishment of Inter-communal engagement. Gazala has engaged in research to understand and promote inter-communal harmony. She has published several articles including: "Floods in Desert" for the Disaster Mitigation Institute, a South Asian initiative on disaster preparedness, 1998, and "Mining and Natural Resource Management" in Exchanging Livelihoods, published by Gender & Learning Team, Oxfam House UK, 1998. Gazala completed the Master's program in Inter-communal Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis University in February 2006. She studied "Peace and Conflict Management" at INCORE, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland in 2004. She also received her Masters in Social Work (MSW) from the Indore School of Social Work, India in 1987 and a Bachelors of Arts from Christian College, India in 1985.