

Summary of research into the needs of UK-based organisations tackling the effects of the Tsunami disaster

Background

The tsunami disaster affected communities across South and South East Asia and East Africa. People from these areas living in the UK and organisations within these communities quickly became a route for aid and support for people in the disaster area. The Foundation's Strengthening the Voluntary Sector projects grants programme aims to help organisations improve their effectiveness. We were interested to consider whether there were any ways in which diaspora organisations working to support the affected communities could be assisted to do this work more effectively. Following discussions with members of the London Funders' Group (LFG) this research was broadened to include whether organisations were experiencing significantly increased demand for particular services.

Method

44 diaspora organisations were identified and asked to take part in a telephone questionnaire covering; fundraising, material donations, services, organisational issues, publicity, awareness of initiatives such as Gift Aid and questions on the background of their organisation. 21 organisations completed the questionnaire.

Findings

The main findings were:

- organisations were doing more work since the tsunami but the work is largely short term and focussed on collecting money.
- Whilst 100 % of the organisations were collecting money, only 33 % of the organisations were aware of the government's Gift Aid scheme.
- Most organisations commented that they struggled with the issues covered in the questionnaire all the time and not just in the aftermath of the tsunami. The work on the tsunami had not made these issues worse.
- A significant number of respondents were interested in exploring the idea of establishing formal twinning relationships with organisations and communities in the affected areas.

Next steps

The following steps are now being taken:

- The London Funders Group were keen to take up the issue of low take up of Gift Aid by small community organisations. Some of the ideas include sending a joint letter to the relevant government bodies adding LFG's weight to the current debate on the need to simplify Gift Aid.
- The Baring Foundation has sent the guidelines for applicants for the Strengthening the Voluntary Sector projects grants programme to all the organisations that took part. It is anticipated that any subsequent applications from these groups can be dealt with within the resources already allocated to this programme.
- A short leaflet was produced giving basic information on Gift Aid. This was sent to all the organisations that took part in the questionnaire and in the future will be sent to all organisations who receive a grant from the Foundation.
- Those organisations that showed an interest in twinning were given the contact details of UKOWLA (UK One World Linking Association), an association that

supports partnerships between communities in the UK and developing countries (www.ukowla.org.uk). The Foundation supported this organisation with a grant of £9,140 in 2004 to produce a manual on good practice in North-South community linking.

The research was carried out for the Foundation by Ellie Robinson.

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Full report

Introduction:

The tsunami disaster has affected communities across South and South East Asia and East Africa. People from these areas living in the UK and organisations within these communities have become a route for aid and support for people in the disaster area.

The Baring Foundation's Strengthening the Voluntary Sector projects grants programme aims to help organisations improve their effectiveness. We were interested to consider whether there were any ways in which diaspora organisations working to support the affected communities can be assisted to do this work more effectively. Following discussions with members of London Funders' Group (LFG) this research was broadened to include whether organisations were experiencing significantly increased demand for particular services.

Methodology:

Firstly, a list of diaspora organisations in England and Wales was drawn from LFG members' databases, and by contacting umbrella organisations, NGOs, individuals and local newspapers and asking them if they knew of any organisations that would be suitable. From this we collected 44 contacts, almost all London based.

Whilst these organisations were being identified, we began to draw up the questionnaire to ask the diaspora organisations. The questionnaire consists of 8 sections: Introduction, Fundraising, Materials, Services, Organisational issues, Publicity, Awareness of other initiatives and About the organisation. Each section includes a series of closed questions. The questionnaire was then sent to a few individuals for their suggestions on how it could be improved. The questionnaire was amended in response to suggestions.

Over the following week the diaspora organisations were phoned (one was e-mailed) and asked the questions. 3 replied that they were not doing anything in response to the Tsunami and 21 responded that they were. The remaining 20 either did not want to take part or could not be contacted. Phoning took place throughout the day and evening to contact as many of the organisations as possible.

The following is the list of organisations who responded that their organisation was involved in tackling the effects of the tsunami disaster:

Buddhapadipa Temple.
Centre for Community Development.
Dharmapala Building,
East London Mosque,
Enfield Naga Poosani Ambaal Temple,
FOI Sivayogam,
Harrow Central Mosque,
Islamic Relief,
London Sree Meenakshi Sunthareshwara Temple,
London Tamil Sangam,
Middlesex Tamil Academy,
Newham United Tamil Association,
Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre,
Shri Kanagathurkkai Amman Hindu Temple Trust,

South London Tamil Welfare Group,
Tamil Action Committee UK,
Tamil Community Centre,
Tamil Refugee Action Group,
The Ram Garhia Gurdwara,
Waltham Forest Tamil Sangam,
West London Islamic Centre.

Questions sought to identify what activities organisations were carrying out, whether they were planning to continue this activity in the short and long term (long term being defined as over 3 months) and whether they had any experience of doing this type of work.

The results were then put into a spreadsheet and conclusions were drawn.

Results:

Out of the 24 contacted, 3 organisations were not tackling the effects of the tsunami and 21 organisations were.

Fundraising:

The results showed that out of the 21 organisations 67% (14 organisations) were running an appeal. However only one organisation was going to continue running the appeal in the long term. 14% (3) of the organisations had never run an appeal before.

Defining activity as an 'appeal' was based on whether they had publicised their involvement in tackling the effects of the tsunami disaster or not; whether they had actively invited donations. 29% (6) of the organisations publicised their appeal in the place of worship and 29% (6) via leaflets. Word of mouth, Newspapers and Websites were also used to a lesser extent.

100% of the organisations contacted were collecting money, and all of them had done this before. Only 14% (3) were going to continue collecting for the tsunami disaster in the long term, many had already stopped. 57% (12) were then sending these donations onto other organisations such as the DEC and 43% (9) were sending the donated money to the affected areas themselves. Only 19% (4) are going to continue sending money to the affected areas in the long term. 10% (2) had never sent money to these areas before.

Only 33% (7) of the organisations were aware of Gift Aid and only 19% (4) were claiming Gift Aid on the donations. Many of the organisations had not heard of Gift Aid. Some had but did not claim it, giving reasons such as, the method of collection (collection buckets) meant that claiming Gift Aid was problematic.

Materials:

71% (15) of organisations were receiving general material donations and 48% (10) were then sending them to the affected areas themselves. Five organisations commented that they were struggling to send over all the goods they had received, as they didn't have enough money. Many also commented that they were using ships and not planes, to reduce the cost. Others were sending them to other organisations and Temples to send the goods over. 24% (5) were receiving and sending medicine and 14% (3) were receiving and sending food and medical equipment. Only one organisation (Islamic Aid) was receiving and sending power generators and water filters.

14% (3) of organisations said that collecting material goods was unmanageable for the size of their organisation, 1 organisation had started but found it difficult to maintain as they didn't have the human resources available.

14% (3) organisations added that the political situation in the affected areas meant that it was difficult to know if support was going to where it was needed.

Services:

Counselling was the largest service being provided by the diaspora organisations, with 19% (4) providing this in the UK and 24% (5) in the affected areas. In addition many of the faith groups were providing informal emotional support rather than qualified counsellors. 10% (2) of organisations said that they could not provide counselling due to a lack of funding.

19% (4) of organisations were also attempting to provide general information on the situation. 14% (3) were providing immigration advice, 10% (2) were providing interpreting/translating services and only 5% (1) was helping to search for lost family. None of the organisations were: providing hardship grants, providing adoption advice or helping to organise travel arrangements.

14% (3) of organisations were sending staff from the UK to the affected areas but only 5% (1) will continue to do this in the long term. 19% had sent volunteers and 14% will continue to do this in the long term.

One organisation commented that they were experiencing problems communicating with people from their organisation who were in remote areas and would benefit from more sophisticated communication devices.

Organisational issues:

Only 10% (2) of organisations had a business plan for the work they were doing and only 5% (1) had provided any extra training for their staff or volunteers.

Awareness of initiatives:

Only 29% (6) were aware of the governments' free flights scheme, however, none of these had used them as all of the free flights were full.

About the Organisation:

62% (13) of the organisations had between 0-2 paid staff in the UK. 14% (3) had 3-6 paid staff in the UK, 14% (3) had 7-14 paid staff in the UK, 0% had 16-30 paid staff in the UK and 10% (2) had 31-100 paid staff in the UK. Only 10% (2) of organisations had paid staff in the country affected.

10% (2) of organisations had 0 volunteers, 43% (4) had 1-15 volunteers, 24% (5) had 16-20 and 24% (5) had over 50.

62% (13) of organisations were based in a place of worship and 38% (8) were based in an office.

71% (15) of organisations were working with other organisations in the UK, only 19% (4) were working with other organisations in the affected areas and only 5% (1) in the long term.

A common issue raised in phone calls and e-mails with both the diaspora and the initial contacts (when trying to identify diaspora organisations) was the idea of twinning. Many people were interested in the idea of their organisation twinning with an organisation in the affected areas to provide long term help.

86% (18) of the organisations had a computer with the software they needed.

Conclusions:

Organisations have been doing more but it is largely short term and focussed on collecting money. Most organisations said that they struggled with the issues covered in the questionnaire all the time, not just since the tsunami. Therefore the idea that diaspora organisations are struggling to cope with the responses to the disaster was not proved. This can be interpreted in two ways:

The small sample size could have led to unreliable results. However when organisations were asked to suggest other groups we could speak to many of the contacts were repeated so we can perhaps be more confident that the sample was useful.

The responses to the tsunami seem to be being delivered by larger, established relief agencies; this suggests that perhaps a similar research exercise needs to be carried out with those organisations. This research could perhaps focus on those organisations that are doing more work as a result of the tsunami but are not accessing funds channelled through DEC appeal, for example The National Missing Persons Helpline who are 'seeking funding to employ someone to run a section on their website dedicated to people missing since the tsunami'. They were quoted in 'Third Sector' on 2nd February as saying 'Funders must realise that life continues for charities such as ours.'

Next steps.

The next steps are to be discussed with the LFG. Ideas stemming from this research thus far include:

- Research-

More research could be carried out to increase the sample size if we think that these results are not representative. The exercise could be broadened to include London and UK organisations that aren't part of the DEC. This could be done by putting adverts in minority language newspapers, Third Sector, etc. When Advice UK was contacted to identify diaspora organisations they suggested that we put an advert in their newsletter out to members.

If further research was to be carried out it may be a better idea to visit the organisation and see the difficulties they are facing rather than phoning them, then we could be more confident that we were getting as much detail as possible.

- Potential areas for targeted support:

Twinning- Organisations seemed keen to pursue this idea; perhaps this could form the focus for work.

Counselling services- This was an area identified by organisations as something they were keen to do but didn't have the funds to do so.

Making use of Gift Aid scheme- Although most organisations were only collecting money donations in the short term, 100% of them had collected money before. Therefore it would seem a good idea that Gift Aid was made better known to these organisations for when they are collecting money in the future.

Sending materials and equipment- Many of the organisations commented that they couldn't afford to send the material and equipment donations over to the affected areas.

The Baring Foundation's response:

As the idea that diaspora organisations are struggling to cope with the responses to the disaster was not proved, setting up a new Grants Programme for these organisations does not seem necessary. They are therefore being sent the information on the Strengthening the Voluntary Sector Projects Programme for which they can then apply if they feel it would be worthwhile.

Information about Gift Aid has been compiled, from www.givingcampaign.org.uk and will be included in letters sent out now and in the future.

Finally, those who showed interest in the idea of twinning with organisations in the affected areas were given the website address of an organisation funded by the Baring Foundation, UKOWLA (UK One World Linking Association). This association supports community based partnerships in the UK with Communities in developing countries. (www.ukowla.org.uk).