

Statement from DEC Trustees 9th July 2008

DEC Board Review of the NAO report on the Asia Quake Appeal

DEC Trustees welcomed the initiative of the National Audit Office to include the Disasters Emergency Committee in their review of the UK's response to the South Asia Earthquake, while confirming that there is no formal relationship between the NAO and the DEC. In view of this study, the DEC did not undertake a collective independent review mission although many of the Member Agencies have conducted their own independent and internal evaluations.

On 10th October, following the news of the severe earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale which struck the Pakistan on 8th October 2005, the DEC launched an appeal to the public. £44 million was raised by the DEC with a further £19 million by the agencies themselves. This enabled the Member Agencies to gear up quickly to respond to the resulting humanitarian situation, made all the more urgent by the impending winter months.

The NAO appreciated the timeliness of the delivery of aid and the fact that DEC funds provided the Member Agencies with a swift and flexible source of funding. The Trustees were pleased to see that the NAO recognised the contribution the Member Agencies made to the relief effort.

The DEC Secretariat recognised the difficulties created by the lack of consistency in agency reporting and have therefore in May 2007 introduced templates for all agency submissions. This has greatly improved the monitoring and review of Member Agency progress against stated objectives and compliance with humanitarian standards, which is now systematically undertaken through the increased resource within the Secretariat. It is expected that information will be more robust as agencies become increasingly familiar with the formats.

The NAO stated that the DEC does not currently monitor compliance with the requirement to submit annual audited accounts; however, each member, as a legally constituted body, is required to submit annual audited accounts to the Charity Commission. These audited accounts are reviewed by the Secretariat as part of the annual process by which the Indicator of Capacity is established to determine the agencies' entitlement percentage of appeal funds.

Determining the level of response a Member Agency plans to deliver lies with each agency. An audit of appeals following Asia Quake shows that agencies will choose not to intervene or take their full entitlement where they deem this appropriate. The DEC is currently planning to undertake a UK based study to examine the decision making around launching an appeal; this will take account of agencies' assessment of their capacity to respond.

The NAO makes a number of observations in relation to inter-agency cooperation on assessments, logistics and human resources. These and other observations will be drawn on to inform the agenda of a lesson learning workshop with key humanitarian staff to be held later this year.

Finally the report states that the DEC Secretariat carries out joint review activities following all appeals, under the revised accountability framework, the DEC Trustees will decide the focus and frequency of review activities including a monitoring mission to the affected area within a few months of the appeal to assist agencies through independent feedback.

24.06.08