



sufficient to ensure appropriate targeting, because it is culturally inappropriate for one sub-clan to challenge the beneficiaries selected by another. To manage this, field managers are required to develop their own network of key informants to double-check the beneficiary list to ensure that registered beneficiaries fit the criteria, and that individuals who should be on the list are not excluded. Minority clans, for example, rarely benefit from resource distributions within wider clan agreements. They usually associate themselves with a majority clan for protection. One minority clan in the area approached agency staff and asked not to be given the money in public, because it would later be taken from them. Agency staff instead organised a meeting at the project office to hand over the money.

#### Cash management

Another interesting dimension of the project was the use of Dahabshil to distribute the cash. In some respects, the partnership worked well; there were no allegations nor was there evidence of corruption, taxation or unusual security concerns. The potential inflationary impact of significant cash injections was minimised, as Dahabshil draws as much as possible on the existing money supply, through the *hawala* or money-transfer system, rather than bringing in additional large amounts. Once the cash was received households gave it to their local shopkeeper to reopen a credit line, so there was no sudden increase of cash in the local economy. There were also teething problems, however, and in some areas there were ongoing difficulties with Dahabshil over communication, informa-

tion-sharing and planning. This highlights the potential hazards of working closely with *hawala* companies, which operate as franchises on the ground, and whose internal structures and systems are not generally designed for cash-transfer projects like this. On the other hand, the *hawala* firms provide a critical service at the household and trading level, and are well respected.

#### Conclusion

The Oxfam-Horn Relief consortium has clearly demonstrated that cash transfers are possible in a politically complex and insecure environment. It has also shown that such projects can be done in a locally sensitive and appropriate way. The project succeeded in establishing strong partnerships and good coordination among the stakeholders, recruited good, motivated staff, ensured that preparation was sound with comprehensive training, adopted a sensitive, context-specific approach, and used a locally respected institution to handle the transport and distribution of the cash. Many of the lessons of the consortium project are replicable elsewhere, but applying them will call for good coordination and a willingness among agencies to critically assess ways of working, and to consider adapting or changing approaches if necessary.

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## Disaster diplomacy in Aceh

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*Defensive* Disaster diplomacy is concerned with the extent to which disaster-related activities – prevention, mitigation, response and recovery – induce cooperation between enemy parties, internationally or nationally.<sup>1</sup> Examples can cover a specific geographic region or country, such as North Korea's international relations following floods, droughts and famines, or they can look at specific disaster events or types. The Global Seismic Hazard Assessment Program, for example, produced seismic hazard maps across sensitive international borders, including regions in conflict.<sup>2</sup> Other transboundary issues include international cooperation in identifying disaster casualties.<sup>3</sup>

✓ Evidence so far suggests that disaster-related activities frequently catalyse diplomatic progress, but rarely create it:

1 See <http://www.disasterdiplomacy.org>.

2 D. Giardini, G. Grünthal, K. M. Shedlock and P. Zhang, 'The GSHAP Global Seismic Hazard Map', *Annali di Geofisica*, vol. 42, no. 6, 1999, pp. 1,225–1,230.

3 J. Scanlon, 'Dealing with the Tsunami Dead: Unprecedented International Co-operation', *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2006, pp. 57–61.

they can have a short-term impact on diplomacy, but, over the long term, non-disaster factors have a more significant influence. Non-disaster factors include leadership change, distrust, the belief that a historical conflict or complaint should take precedence over present-day humanitarian needs, or priorities for action other than conflict resolution. In some cases, disaster-related activities can exacerbate conflict and reduce the opportunities for diplomacy.

evidence so far suggests that disaster-related activities frequently catalyse diplomatic progress, but rarely create it

To explain why disaster-related activities sometimes spur on a pre-existing diplomatic process, but usually do not generate new diplomacy, the theory and trends behind these observations have been investigated. Disaster

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diplomacy 'pathways' have been defined, explaining how different players choose different approaches in making disaster-related activities either support or inhibit diplomatic processes. Other typologies of disaster diplomacy have analysed the influence of proximity among the countries involved in disaster diplomacy, and their aid relationships and interactions.

### Disaster diplomacy criteria

In trying to define disaster diplomacy, each case study needs to answer six questions.

The first question is fundamental: did disaster-related activities influence diplomatic activities? If the answer is no, then no basis exists for examining disaster diplomacy.

Second, is the disaster-related diplomacy new? After the 1999 earthquakes in Greece and Turkey, the two countries achieved significant *rapprochement*, yet their peace talks had started months before the earthquakes struck, so the diplomacy was not new.<sup>4</sup>

Third, is the disaster-related diplomacy legitimate? The players involved must be genuinely seeking closer connections, rather than using the events as a public relations exercise, or simply waiting for an opportunity to avoid proceeding further with diplomacy. This question is often difficult to answer, but in case studies of Cuba-US relations,<sup>5</sup> the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict,<sup>6</sup> and the Democratic Republic of Congo,<sup>7</sup> opportunities for disaster diplomacy have foundered because at least one party seemed to be looking for an excuse to avoid peace.

Fourth, how long does the disaster-related diplomacy last? After the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, new peace initiatives between New Delhi and Islamabad emerged, and the leaders displayed openness and a willingness to move forward. Although a summit six months later collapsed in acrimony, diplomacy eventually restarted and was then boosted by the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

Fifth, when a disaster occurs, does the post-disaster diplomacy depend on the characteristics of the post-disaster reconstruction? So far, no case studies have answered yes to this. Post-disaster reconstruction on the ground is rapidly divorced, inadvertently or deliberately, from higher-level diplomatic activities.

Finally, does post-disaster diplomacy address long-standing development and sustainability issues, including political, livelihood and economic concerns? In most cases, disasters

or crises have not led to the resolution or full consideration of longer-term challenges, including those related to livelihoods, environmental management, inequity and injustice. An exception was the successful management of the 1991-93 drought emergency in Southern Africa, which occurred in the context of rapid and significant political and developmental change across the region.<sup>9</sup>

### The low priority of disaster-related activities

There are multiple reasons why disaster-related activities have less influence on diplomacy than might be expected or hoped. Prejudice, misgiving and mistrust can defeat disaster diplomacy efforts, as demonstrated by the conflict over aid in post-tsunami Sri Lanka.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Cuba refused American assistance during the 1998 drought,<sup>11</sup> and the US did not accept offers of aid from Cuba, Venezuela and Iran following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In some cases, countries might not need external assistance, or could claim that they do not, so that no basis exists for attempting disaster diplomacy. Overall, disaster-related activities are not necessarily a high political priority, even after a disaster. Unsurprisingly, factors other than a concern to prevent disasters or save lives when disasters happen tend to be more important in political decision-making.

### Is Aceh different?

The relief and reconstruction operation that followed the tsunami in December 2004 opened up Aceh to the world, ending the isolation the Indonesian government had imposed due to a decades-long separatist conflict. In January 2005, the government and the main separatist group, the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), announced that peace talks would be resumed, leading to an August 2005 Memorandum of Understanding. So far, the agreement has held. Determining whether or not disaster diplomacy occurred in Aceh can be done by addressing the six questions outlined above.

First, have disaster-related activities influenced diplomatic activities? The disaster deeply influenced the initial peace talks and the eventual implementation of the August agreement. The involvement of the international community was instrumental, and was motivated in particular by Aceh's need for foreign relief assistance. Later, long-term demilitarisation was added to these considerations, so that post-tsunami reconstruction and post-conflict reconstruction were to some degree conducted side by side. The disaster therefore influenced diplomacy.

Second, is the disaster-related diplomacy new? Negotiations between the Indonesian government and GAM had been going on intermittently for years before the disaster, and secret peace talks had begun on 24 December 2004. The tsunami disaster did not therefore yield new diplomacy. But it did significantly spur on a process that had just begun to solidify.

9 A. Holloway, 'Drought Emergency, Yes ... Drought Disaster, No: Southern Africa 1991-93', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2000, pp. 254-76.

10 D. Rajasingham-Senanayake, 'Sri Lanka and the Violence of Reconstruction', *Development*, vol. 48, 2005, pp. 111-20.

11 Glantz, 'Climate-related Disaster Diplomacy'.

4 J. Ker-Lindsay, 'Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: The Impact of "Disaster Diplomacy"?' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2000, pp. 215-32.

5 M. H. Glantz, 'Climate-related Disaster Diplomacy: A US-Cuban Case Study', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2000, pp. 233-53.

6 I. Kelman, 'Acting on Disaster Diplomacy', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2006, pp. 215-40.

7 B. Wisner, 'Eruption Raises Practical and Philosophical Issues', *AlertNet*, 15 February 2003, <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefresources/392595.htm>.

8 Kelman, 'Acting on Disaster Diplomacy'.

Third, is the disaster-related diplomacy legitimate? Both parties appeared to want genuine *rapprochement*, and neither seemed to be using the events as a public relations exercise. This was shown by the quick demilitarisation of Aceh and the relatively rapid political negotiations on its status. Players on both sides appeared committed to making peace work.

Next, how long has the disaster-related diplomacy lasted? While the guns quickly fell silent following the tsunami, and have to date stayed relatively quiet, long-term political reconstruction is still uncertain. Although there is optimism, it would be premature to assume that a long-term solution to the conflict has been found.

## X disaster-related activities need to be integrated into wider policies and practices

Fifth, does the post-disaster diplomacy depend on the characteristics of the post-disaster reconstruction? So far, accusations of slow, unequal, corrupt and poorly planned reconstruction have not been used to threaten the resumption of hostilities. Instead, the reconstruction tends to be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen peace by requiring communities to work together. Again, optimism is warranted, although isolated violence means that mistrust persists, and poor reconstruction could eventually exacerbate pre-tsunami inequities and frustrations. Unresolved pre-tsunami factors and unrelated events could thus be more significant than the tsunami with respect to long-term conflict resolution. The evidence to date, though, suggests that the specific characteristics of the post-tsunami reconstruction have not heavily affected diplomacy.

Finally, does post-disaster diplomacy address long-standing development and sustainability issues, including political, economic and livelihood concerns? The peace deal included a greater share of natural resources for Aceh, and granted it sovereignty in internal matters. But the Indonesian parliament removed the requirement that local leaders agree to measures touching on Acehese affairs, and reduced the local share of natural resource revenues from 70% to 60%. This suggests that post-disaster diplomacy did not overcome long-standing political and economic issues, especially Jakarta's reluctance to grant autonomy in regions it controls. Nonetheless, the measures enacted following the tsunami constitute a major change from Aceh's pre-tsunami status.

### Conclusion

Studying Aceh following the tsunami provides useful insights into the six questions underpinning disaster diplomacy. The evidence confirms conclusions from other disaster diplomacy studies, namely that disaster-related activities can have a short-term impact on diplomacy, but that over the long term non-disaster factors have a more significant influence. Additionally, most other detailed case

studies have addressed inter-state conflict, whereas Aceh is an intra-state conflict. Combined with other intra-state case studies, including post-tsunami Sri Lanka, where conflict resumed irrespective of the 2004 disaster, the Aceh work provides a starting point for comparing different forms of conflict. The potential implication is that disaster diplomacy at all levels is similar, irrespective of the players involved.

In this case, much of the international involvement focused on the need for a ceasefire to allow post-tsunami aid to reach Aceh. The international community facilitated the peace talks and supported the formal EU-ASEAN effort to monitor the peace agreement (the Aceh Monitoring Mission), but the impacts of the conflict tended to be viewed as secondary to those of the tsunami.<sup>12</sup> Other disaster diplomacy case studies have given limited attention to similarities or disparities in the resources provided for conflict, versus other disaster concerns in the same area.

The main policy implication is that disaster diplomacy studies support the established view that disaster-related activities need to be integrated into wider policies and practices, especially in the context of long-standing problems such as under-development, conflict and poor governance. Moreover, there is a need for caution regarding disaster diplomacy. Despite the popularity of the theoretical idea of disaster-induced reconciliation, especially in the media, experience suggests that it is rarely robust in practice, and has yet to form a strong basis for reducing enmity. Disaster diplomacy has significant potential, but that potential is rarely fulfilled.

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<sup>12</sup> *Aceh and Nias One Year After the Tsunami: The Recovery Effort and Way Forward*, various agencies, 2005.

### Further reading

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PRACTICE AND POLICY NOTES