

2010 Final Report

Asia Assessment Findings



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Executive Summary

Page | European Disaster Volunteers (EDV) is a volunteer driven, registered charity that aids disaster affected
3 communities worldwide by helping them achieve sustainable recovery. Our origins are European but our approach is global - we welcome volunteers and donors regardless of nationality.

In the autumn of 2009, EDV had just registered as a charity when a string of disasters began to unfold across Asia and the Pacific. We knew that as a new charity we faced many challenges in launching a deployment, but we felt that we couldn't ignore what was happening in Asia. So in October 2009 we launched our Asia-Pacific Disaster Recovery Appeal.

Buoyed by a positive response to the appeal, on 9th February we sent an assessment team comprised of our Executive Director, Andrew Chaggar and our Media and Marketing Director, Emma Taylor, to Vietnam and the Philippines to evaluate the possibility of EDV's first full scale deployment.

Our assessment team arrived in Asia with high hopes but after three months of assessment it became clear that given our limited financial resources a deployment in Asia would not have positively impacted the lives of disaster survivors and therefore have been financially irresponsible.

Although we are convinced that leaving Asia was the right choice, we also recognise that it may be a difficult decision for donors to understand. We're concerned that our inability to deploy in Asia may cause some supporters to question whether or not EDV is a worthy recipient of their donations. That concern is the impetus behind this report.

Our Asia Assessment Final Report provides a full picture of our activities in Asia so that any interested party can understand how and why the decision not to deploy was made.

This report begins with a short paper of essential background which outlines EDV's approach to disaster response and the details of the disasters to which we were responding. It will then move into two technical reports on our assessment findings in Vietnam and the Philippines. These technical reports outline the assessment teams' activities, what they saw on the ground, and the challenges that eventually forced them to conclude that a deployment would have been unworkable.

The technical reports are followed by a section detailing the opportunities for organisational learning we've identified during our time in Asia and the report then ends with a conclusion summarising our experiences.

We believe that although we were not able to deploy in Asia, we have gained invaluable new knowledge on responding to typhoons and other recurring disasters that will serve us well as EDV develops.

In closing, we'd like to thank you for your support and interest in EDV. Please don't hesitate to get in touch should you require any more information by emailing executive@europeandisastervolunteers.org

Warm regards,

The Directors and Trustees at European Disaster Volunteers

Essential Background

Page | 4 Before moving into the details of our assessment, we feel that it's important to provide some background information on how EDV responds to disasters, the facts surrounding the disasters in Asia, and why we were compelled to respond to those events. This section doesn't deal directly with our assessment; rather it provides the information needed to put this report into context. If after reading this section, you still have more general questions about EDV, please feel free to visit our website, www.EDVolunteers.org

About EDV

As in the Executive Summary, European Disaster Volunteers (EDV) is a volunteer driven, registered charity that aids disaster affected communities worldwide by providing initial relief and helping them achieve sustainable recovery. Our origins are European but our approach is global - we welcome all volunteers and donors whatever their nationality.

At EDV, we believe that the best route toward sustainable recovery is community based disaster response. Our mission statement reflects this core belief:

At EDV we believe that to provide meaningful relief and reconstruction assistance to disaster affected communities around the world we have to do more than reconstruct buildings. We need to understand and address the factors that made a community vulnerable to the disaster in the first place. Our work will be organised with these factors in mind so that we can affect change that far outlives our presence. Furthermore, we will make this information available to all volunteers so that they will be empowered to affect positive, long-term change in their day to day lives as well as while volunteering.

EDV also operates by several key operating principles, which you can view here - <http://www.edvolunteers.org/mission-statement-operating-principles>

When the string of disasters struck Asia-Pacific between September and November 2009 we saw an opportunity to apply the principles on which EDV was founded. As the disasters occurred in countries where disasters are very frequent and communities often live in poverty, the need for long-term recovery was pronounced. The combination of poverty and frequent disasters can leave families trapped in a cycle of being devastated by recurrent disasters. This cyclical destruction can be a force which reinforces poverty and inhibits development.

Such a cycle starts when a family, which is typically poor initially, is affected by a disaster and loses their home, possessions, and/or livelihoods. This leaves them in a difficult position and forces them to rebuild using the limited resources available to them. This weak reconstruction leaves them more vulnerable to the next disaster. When that next disaster strikes, as it inevitably will in a disaster prone country, the family is even less able to resist and respond and so the cycle continues.

Long-term recovery which addresses the issues making communities vulnerable to disaster is essential if communities in disaster prone countries, like those affected in the autumn of 2009, are to break this destructive cycle.

Page | EDV has the knowledge and experience to offer such long-term aid. So when the disasters struck Asia we
5 felt that we couldn't ignore the opportunity to put our understanding of long-term recovery to work. So, despite the challenges facing us as a new charity, we launched our Asia-Pacific Disaster Recovery Appeal in October 2009 with the goal of securing set-up funding for a long-term deployment in Vietnam or the Philippines.

The appeal raised over 8,000 Euros, which our experience indicated was sufficient funding to begin a deployment. However in the end, because of the context of Vietnam and the Philippines, which is elaborated upon in each country's technical report on pages seven and twenty respectively, our funding was insufficient. But while we could not deploy we feel that, given the nature of the disasters in Asia, the *attempt* to deploy was not a mistake.

The disasters in Asia presented a huge need for long-term recovery and an excellent opportunity to apply our knowledge and experience in disaster vulnerability and sustainable recovery. The rest of this section elaborates on the nature of those disasters and on why EDV chose to respond to them.

Background on the Asia-Pacific Disasters in the autumn of 2009

Between September and November 2009, a series of disasters swept through Asia and the Pacific. These disasters included an earthquake on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, a tsunami on the island of Samoa, and a series of typhoons which primarily affected the Philippines and Vietnam.

EDV responded to the typhoons which swept across the Philippines and Vietnam. Our decision to exclude Indonesia from our assessment came after research indicated that the Indonesian government was limiting the activities of international aid groups to temporary shelters and other transitional measures. We further excluded Samoa because of the cost involved in transporting people and materials to the extremely isolated islands.

In typhoon affected Vietnam and the Philippines we saw an excellent opportunity for EDV to make a long term impact on the lives of typhoon survivors. These typhoons, which are detailed in the each country's technical reports, caused extensive damage.

In the Philippines seven months after the disaster 25,000 people were still displaced by flooding, landslides, and the destruction of their homes. More than 600 died in landslides alone. The situation in Vietnam was similarly difficult.

These typhoons had particularly devastating effects because they were atypical storms. Meetings with typhoon survivors and the IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) confirmed that, as suggested by our research prior to assessment, these typhoons brought extensive, extremely damaging rains. By contrast, prior to these storms most typhoons had previously brought strong winds but moderate rain.

In fact, Typhoon Ketsana, the first of the typhoons to strike the area, brought a month's worth of rain in one night. It was followed by Typhoon Parma. While Parma was less intense, it hovered over land for nearly a week while most typhoons sweep quickly over a land mass. The resulting floods and landslides from these atypical typhoons were the worst in living memory.

Page | 6 The effects of the typhoons in these two disaster prone countries highlighted the need for long-term, sustainable recovery. These communities can expect to see another round of multiple typhoons in the autumn of 2010. Following the unusually devastating impacts of typhoons Ketsana and Parma, communities will be more vulnerable to these approaching 2010 storms.

Because of these long-term, "knock-on" effects we did not see our delayed assessment, which started about six months after the typhoons, as a problem. When we started assessment the typhoons were long gone, but their long-term effects were still threatening lives through increased vulnerability. As expected, when the assessment team arrived in Asia they found themselves looking directly at the cycle of disaster, explained earlier, which EDV endeavors to break.

It was this clear view of cyclical disasters which prompted the EDV assessment team to extend the assessment from the expected one or two months to almost three while they searched for a way around the obstacles that were in their way.

Unfortunately after a great deal of work it became clear that given our limited funding, the obstacles were such that EDV was not going to be able to have a positive impact on communities and that deployment would have been financially irresponsible.

However the assessment team's findings confirm that although EDV was unable to deploy in Asia, our understanding of disasters holds true: Long-term recovery in disaster prone countries must be central to ensuring that communities are not trapped in a destructive cycle of disaster. Further, in Asia we gained an opportunity to learn huge amounts about responding to cyclical flood and typhoon disasters. We look forward to implementing those lessons in other disaster zones worldwide.

Vietnam Technical Report

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7 On 29th September 2009, typhoon Ketsana struck 12 provinces in central Vietnam. There were up to 170 deaths reported, the destruction of over 21,000 homes and damage to over 470,000 more.

On 2nd November 2009, typhoon Miranae struck 9 provinces in the country, 7 of which had been previously affected. Reports stated up to 123 further deaths, the destruction of a further 2,362 homes and damage to 106,000 more.

An assessment team from European Disaster Volunteers (EDV) arrived in the country on 9th February 2010 to consider the possibility of supporting local recovery efforts.

Many feasible projects were identified and, after extensive negotiations, verbal agreement was reached to start initial construction on three projects. Sadly, the final written proposal was rejected by the local authorities, whose support was essential to proceed.

EDV had anticipated that applying a flexible volunteer model in a country with Vietnam's political climate was going to be difficult. When combined with EDV's limited start-up funding, this made EDV's proposed activities too much of a "hard-sell" for the relevant authorities.

The rest of this report will detail the EDV team's activities and findings, and how the decision not to deploy in Vietnam was reached.

Summary of Activities

This section details EDV's activities during the assessment period.

The EDV team arrived in Da Nang province on 16th February 2010. With the assistance of the provincial office of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the team assessed four affected districts in Da Nang between 23rd and 25th February.

On 26th February the EDV team traveled to an affected district in the neighbouring province of Quang Nam, the province worst affected by typhoon Ketsana.

Between 27th and 28th February, the EDV team travelled to Phu Yen which was the singularly worst affected province by Miranae. The team met with the provincial Union of Friendship Organisations (UFO) and with their assistance assessed two affected districts.

While many potential projects and major opportunities were identified in all areas visited, serious potential challenges to EDV operations were also highlighted.

Between 1st and 3rd March, the EDV team provided a comprehensive interim assessment report to EDV directors in the UK which detailed both threats to, and opportunities for, potential operations. The EDV team also sent a comprehensive list of operational questions to the authorities in both Da Nang and Phu Yen to establish whether or not the highlighted obstacles could be satisfactorily negotiated.

The authorities in Da Nang gave no indication that the challenges could be overcome. As the authorities in Phu Yen provided highly encouraging answers and suggested valid solutions, the EDV team returned to the Phu Yen province on 10th March.

On 11th March a further face-to-face meeting was held with Phu Yen branch of UFO. During this meeting, verbal agreement on all the remaining points of concern appeared to have been reached. Subsequently the EDV team submitted a written draft of a formal working contract at the end of the day.

On 13th March, to the disappointment of the EDV team, this draft was rejected. The UFO responded with a counter proposal, which removed many key points which had been negotiated between EDV and the UFO over the previous week. One of the key points removed was the use of volunteers onsite and essentially reduced EDV's involvement in the project to that of a grant making body. More details of the counter proposal are provided later in this report.

The nature of these retractions, combined with previously highlighted challenges, caused the EDV team to conclude that the situation had become untenable. While further discussions were possible, EDV's still relatively-limited financial capital made an extended negotiation period difficult to absorb and justify. Furthermore, it made a satisfactory outcome highly unlikely to achieve.

General Observations & Outcomes

In the period leading up to negotiations (which included the Lunar New Year holiday) the EDV team spent a considerable amount of time contacting relevant individuals and groups in the typhoon-affected areas, including other international NGOs operating in the country.

Several of these, who had years of experience working independently in Vietnam, stated that, owing to the political context, it would be extremely prudent for the EDV team to contact government representatives as early as possible.

With travel booked to Da Nang, bordering the worst affected province of Quang Nam, the Da Nang Department of Foreign Affairs was EDV's first point of contact.

Staff in this office generously met with the EDV team on 18th February, although this was still during the local holiday. They were extremely hospitable and organised both a translator and meetings with the People's Committees in the four outlying districts of the province. These committees essentially form the local government of a given area and are appointed by an elected People's Council to make day-to-day decisions on the district's affairs.

Both provinces (the administrative level above the district) and communes/wards (the level below the district) also often have a People's Committee. This is a somewhat complex situation and without major experience it can be difficult to understand how responsibilities and authority is separated in such cases.

After assessing four districts in Da Nang the EDV team met with a representative of Vietnam Relief Effort (VRE) on the 26th February. VRE is a US-registered organisation with charitable status. They have been active in Vietnam since late 1999 and conduct both disaster relief as well as more general development projects.

With VRE, the EDV team traveled to Quang Nam province to meet with People's Committees in different wards of one affected district.

VRE then facilitated an introduction to the Phu Yen UFO (PYUFO). During the EDV team's initial visit to the province, PYUFO also generously organised a translator and meetings with the People's Committees in two affected districts.

In all districts visited the EDV team assessed potential project sites proposed by the People's Committees which are discussed in more detail below.

Due to the relatively rapid nature of assessment there was little opportunity to talk independently to survivors about their own priorities. It was hoped that this would have been possible if EDV projects had been pursued further.

Da Nang Province Specifics

Da Nang is Vietnam's fourth largest city and as such seems to receive a relatively large amount of national aid and have a stronger local capacity than other areas visited. As a result the central city appears, on the surface, to have recovered completely from any affects of typhoon Ketsana.

However there is much evident hardship in the outlying districts where communities rely heavily on agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods.

Migrant workers are attracted to the area due to the close proximity of the city and hopes for employment. However with little resources of their own, these migrant workers often dwell in poorly constructed homes in areas vulnerable to frequent storms and floods.

The EDV team visited four such districts and met with the People's Committee in each. Many potential project sites were visited, which are discussed in more detail below. In many cases there was notable evidence of recent destruction. However in some instances the damage observed may well have been inflicted by previous storms.

Regardless of whether they had been affected by Ketsana or previous typhoons, however, many of the potential projects were worthwhile and feasible for EDV to implement. Such projects could easily have spanned the gap between relief and risk reduction.

On a final note the area is rapidly developing a significant tourist infrastructure, with many major resorts under construction. This can bring both negatives and positives for nearby communities. However, English education projects could have provided an effective, low-cost way of facilitating access to employment for community members with currently limited prospect

Quang Nam Province Specifics

Although Quang Nam was more seriously affected than Da Nang, it's much larger size, the political context of Vietnam and the limited time available made any kind of comprehensive assessment impractical.

However, with the assistance of VRE the EDV team visited one district and met with relevant People's Committees.

The EDV team then visited two potential project sites, both of which were schools. The second showed evidence of recent destruction to two classroom buildings. The first, although undoubtedly in a poor state of repair and a worthwhile cause, would have been exclusively a disaster risk reduction project.

Although fairly remote, the district has a small guesthouse and the schools might have made good satellite projects if an EDV deployment had become established in Da Nang.

Phu Yen Province Specifics

Phu Yen province lies roughly half way between Ho Chi Minh City in the south and Da Nang in the centre of Vietnam. Bus travel is about nine hours in either direction.

Phu Yen is among the five poorest provinces in the country with poverty rates and income being double and half the national average respectively. It is relatively small geographically and with both mountains and coastline there is restricted land on which to develop.

During the first trip to Phu Yen the EDV team visited two of the districts worst affected by Miranae and met with People's Committees in both. Several potential project sites were visited which are discussed in more detail below. There was major evidence of recent destruction and, in comparison to Da Nang, much more evidence of urgent support being needed.

These visits were facilitated by the PYUFO whose staff was helpful and generous with their time. Overall they appeared very keen to establish a relationship and offered to support EDV should we begin a deployment there.

Although the Da Nang UFO also offered support, the impression received was that Phu Yen was much less serviced by international NGOs than Da Nang.

On a final note there is much potential for tourism development but the province has so far been unable to act on their aspirations.

Although smaller hotels are common there are no major resorts to cater for mainstream tourists. The province would undoubtedly prove popular with independent travelers but with only local bus services stopping in the area it has so far proved difficult to attract even small numbers of international visitors. Volunteers could therefore have had a positive impact simply by being there and attracting others.

Potential Projects Identified

This section provides more detail about potential projects identified in the provinces visited.

This information was originally detailed in the interim report to EDV's directors in the UK so that they could fully consider the need for support and the nature of the assessment team's subsequent negotiations.

All projects would have required the involvement of local contractors and the negotiation of volunteer work-sharing agreements was a key focus of discussions with the Vietnamese authorities.

Page | Furthermore, all People's Committees were very keen to obtain funding for the larger projects discussed with EDV. While these were considered by the EDV team to be feasible at a later date, major funding proposals
11 would have needed to be submitted based on an existing EDV presence. As a result, the initial level of funding to be committed by EDV was also a key focus of discussions with the Vietnamese authorities.

Details are included in this final assessment report for the sake of completeness and the understanding of other interested parties.

Cost estimates are based on discussions with the relevant People's Committees or on detailed plans provided to the EDV team.

Da Nang Province, Hanh Son District, Specifics

- **Demolition and rebuild of a nursery for 30 children under 6 years - estimated cost EU9,500.**

The nursery is a small community building that was reportedly condemned after typhoon Ketsana. The People's Committee would like to remove the ruined building and build a new, larger structure.

Another building is currently rented by the government to serve as the school, and it is unclear why the government could not simply continue to rent the building indefinitely. Questions to this effect have gone unanswered when posed to local officials.

- **Removal of 5-7 temporary houses and rebuilding of typhoon-resistant homes for deprived families/survivors - estimated cost EU2,200 each.**

Some houses in the area had already been rebuilt but there were evidently still a few families living in shacks made of bamboo/corrugated metal/tying wire. These frequently collapse during typhoons and trap families in a cycle of poverty.

The People's Committee would like to replace these with permanent, typhoon resistant homes, allowing the families to gain a major leg up. They reportedly already have plans provided by other NGOs

- **Reinforcement of 4km of irrigation canal with concrete sides - estimated cost EU40,000.**

The community's main livelihood is agriculture and they are very dependent on an irrigation canal which feeds 100 hectares of land.

The canal is evidently suffering from erosion, which is reportedly exacerbated by floods and storms, and the community would like to reinforce the sides with concrete.

Although the project is quite large in scope the work would have been fairly simple. Once we understood how to divert the water temporarily it would be a matter of digging trenches, laying forms and rebar, pouring concrete, repeat - again, again, again, etc. This would have been a great project for using large numbers of unskilled volunteers - possibly university groups for both fundraising and labour. It may have been possible to tackle the project in smaller, prioritised sections - this may have increased cost in the long-term but made it easier to tackle financially in short term.

- **Construction of two multi-purpose community shelters - estimated cost EU45,000 each.**

These shelters are critical during typhoons. They are large concrete buildings with two floors that provide a hub for first aid, relief distribution and shelter during larger storms and floods that often accompany them. Communities are often cut-off during typhoons and these buildings are a critical lifeline during emergencies. During quieter times they are used for community meetings.

The community has one shelter but it can only house one third of the current population.

The cost and technical nature of the buildings would have presented obvious challenges but could have been feasible if EDV became well-established locally and internationally. EDV would have needed to submit a major grant proposal and hire skilled locals for major work. However volunteers could have been used to support the skilled labour - eg. digging foundations, tying rebar, mixing concrete, rendering ground floor and inside second floor.

Da Nang Province, Son Tra District, Specifics

- **Providing concrete replacement for tin roof on health clinic - estimated cost EU8,000.**

This single story health clinic serves a population of 15,000 people. It reportedly loses its roof often and has to be evacuated during storms (the current one is held in place by sandbags). However it is during storms that the health clinic is most needed as the area is frequently cut off from the main community hospital during storms so residents have no access to primary health care.

- **Repair / strengthening of 155 homes to be typhoon-resistant - estimated cost unknown.**

This is a coastal district that suffers frequent damage by typhoons. Many homes are evidently in a very poor state of repair with half collapsed walls and missing roofs.

Da Nang Province, Hoa Vang District, Specifics

- **Demolition of 16-17 destroyed houses and rebuilding of typhoon-resistant homes for deprived families / survivors - estimated cost EU2,400 each with 20% provided by the government for at least 9 houses.**

Some houses in the area have already been rebuilt but there are a number with evident recent damage.

The People's Committee would like to replace these with permanent, typhoon-resistant homes, allowing the families to resist future typhoons rather than being trapped in a cycle of losing and reconstructed their homes.

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- **Construction of one multi-purpose community shelter - estimated cost unknown.**

Similar to project in Hanh Son district.

Da Nang Province, Lien Chieu District, Specifics

- **Demolition and removal of up to 73 destroyed / temporary houses and rebuilding of typhoon-resistant homes for deprived families / survivors - estimated cost unknown.**

Some houses in the area had already been rebuilt but there were a number with evident recent damage or which had been erected hastily with sheet metal and other scavenged materials. The latter will undoubtedly collapse again.

The People's Committee would like to replace these with permanent, typhoon-resistant homes, allowing the families to gain a major leg up.

- **Construction of one multi-purpose community shelter - estimated cost EU45,000.**

Similar to project in Hanh Son district.

Quang Nam Province, Hiep Duc District, Specifics

- **Demolition and construction of 2 school buildings - estimated cost EU12,000 each**

As noted previously one of these would be exclusively a disaster-risk reduction project. The other is a reconstruction project.

Phu Yen Province, Tuy An District, Specifics

- **Demolition and removal of up to 204 destroyed / temporary houses and rebuilding of typhoon-resistant homes for survivors - estimated cost EU1,600 to EU2,400 each depending on preference.**

Some houses in the area have already been rebuilt but there is evidence of major destruction and a dire need of support.

The housing of volunteers in the immediate area would not have been possible but the district is a 40 minute local bus ride from the province's largest town. This could have been reduced by at least a third through access to an EDV vehicle, which was proposed to be a rented bus initially.

The PYUFO provided detailed plans of 5 different typhoon-resistant designs which also include a budget based on costs from October 2009.

Phu Yen Province, Dong Sung District, Specifics

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- **Reconstruction of "satellite" schools as multi-purpose community buildings - estimated cost EU55,000 each.**

Although there is also much need for housing support in this district, the main preference of the People's Committee is for school reconstruction.

Due to the district's geography they use a system of small satellite schools which surround larger main schools. Many of these satellite schools suffered severe damage or complete destruction. In the sites visited by EDV, children are currently being taught in small replacement tents.

The People's Committee would like to combine two satellite schools into one reconstruction project (with this model to be repeated in different areas). The new buildings would be typhoon-resistant and would house 4 classrooms over 2 floors. The new structure could therefore also act as a community shelter during storms and floods.

Housing volunteers in the immediate area was not possible but the district is a 60 minute local bus ride from the provinces largest town.

Opportunities for EDV Operations

This section provides more details about potential opportunities identified during the assessment.

Unfortunately, in the end these opportunities were not able to overcome the difficulties of operating in Vietnam, and the EDV assessment team was forced to move on. These opportunities have been preserved in this report for the sake of completeness and so that any interested party may access the information.

Government Partnerships and Guidance

A high level of government involvement in projects provided an opportunity to fit EDV into the larger picture of Vietnamese disaster response and risk reduction. Working with government officials who were aware of larger initiatives and policies could have helped EDV ensure it was supporting, and not undermining, existing efforts

Existing INGO Presence

There are many other international NGOs operating in Vietnam that run projects ranging from disaster relief to longer-term risk reduction and development. The EDV team made contact with many of their representatives and the majority were very positive about the potential for partnerships.

This could have provided an excellent opportunity for growth and expansion, as well as for general organisational learning.

In particular, Aid for Children, Vietnam Relief Effort and Children of Vietnam were excellent sources of information and general guidance.

Strong Community Ethos

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In Vietnam there is a strong emphasis placed on community cohesion. In both the general population and government officials, this focus on community is deeply ingrained in the culture.

This meant that EDV's mission of building community capacity was likely to find fertile ground. In particular, government officials were keen to make community building projects EDV's first priority, and there was also a strong interest in community education projects.

Potential Long Term Scope for Projects and Growth

The overall scope for projects and expansion in Vietnam is almost limitless. The country is struck by multiple typhoons every year and an established EDV deployment would therefore have provided access to meaningful volunteer opportunities for as long as deemed appropriate.

The assessment revealed scope for projects stretching over three provinces, including the need for hundreds of typhoon resistant homes, multiple schools, community shelters, irrigation reinforcement, education, and disaster preparedness.

With access to further funding EDV could undoubtedly have had a huge impact on the lives of many vulnerable to disasters.

Although ultimately hypothetical, given the challenges to be discussed, there was also possible scope for a permanent volunteer presence. Local staffing costs are very cheap and therefore presented the possibility of establishing either a Vietnamese chapter of EDV or a local NGO.

Strong Ties to EDV Mission

Vietnam is very vulnerable to weather-related disasters, highlighting the need to develop community capacity to cope with natural hazards. Likewise, Vietnam is very exposed to the effects of climate change, thus tying neatly into EDV's goal of raising awareness about the links between volunteer lifestyle choices and natural disasters.

Good Operating Environment for Volunteers

Many of the assessed regions would provide excellent work environments for both experienced and more mainstream volunteers.

While no deployment is without risk or challenge, the areas are politically and environmentally stable and the EDV team would have felt more than comfortable safely managing volunteers. The project sites are in or near cities where volunteers could meet all of their material needs. There are also large numbers of hotels and guest houses catering to different budgets.

Furthermore, many assessed areas are close to beaches or provide other opportunities for volunteers during downtime. Bringing international volunteers to some of these areas could also provide a much-needed boost to the local economy.

Challenges to EDV Operations

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- 16 EDV's assessment revealed huge scope for projects, and also many possible related opportunities, if a deployment had become possible.

However, it also revealed many major challenges to how EDV might operate within the political context of Vietnam. These were both in regards to beginning a deployment and also effectively continuing to operate in the long-term.

The EDV team made a considerable effort to negotiate a formal working agreement with relevant Vietnamese authorities. Sadly it was not possible to achieve a deal that would allow EDV to operate with enough confidence, particularly in the long-term. Given that this would also be EDV's first deployment, the potential risks to the organisation as a whole were also deemed untenable.

EDV's relatively small amount of start-up funding made it difficult for the team to negotiate the system. Simply put, money talks in Vietnam. While EDV has built an extensive network of potential donors the funding available to commit immediately was insufficient to convince the authorities that EDV was of enough value to accommodate.

The following sections detail the challenges and how the EDV team attempted to negotiate a working solution.

Deployment Time Scale and Official Authorisation to Work

Officially, the first step for a foreign NGO working in Vietnam is to apply for a *permit of operations* from the national government. Once approved, which can take up to 30 days, actual project proposals are submitted to the relevant People's Committee before commencing work.

While a permit of operations would definitely be required to operate effectively in the long-term, the EDV team was concerned about a prolonged and uncertain approval process before starting work.

A large delay would have been difficult for EDV to absorb as the assessment team would be in a holding pattern, spending more of both EDV's set-up funding and their own personal money. Furthermore, without projects actually secured, further fund-raising would have been difficult.

The EDV assessment team therefore proposed to begin work on a small scale, with the agreement of the provincial authorities.

The verbal agreement with PYUFO was that they would assist EDV with obtaining a permit of operations once initial work was underway and would provide support in the interim. However, given the sudden rejection of key clauses in the written agreement, the EDV team felt that operating without an official permit, even for a short time, was too large a risk. While such unofficial operation is

certainly possible with the support of local authorities, the EDV team was now concerned that this support could potentially be withdrawn at any time, leaving EDV in a very difficult legal position.

EDV Volunteer Model and Involvement

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Officially volunteers are required to hold a working visa and must be approved by both the national and local governments. This can be a laborious and slow process and would make EDV's flexible volunteer model very difficult to apply.

However many international NGOs, with the support of the local authorities, do use casual volunteers who solely hold tourist visas.

PYUFO verbally agreed that this would be possible as long as EDV provided a list of new arrivals (with passport and visa information) one week in advance. It was also verbally agreed that PYUFO would support long-term volunteers with visa extensions as needed.

With this support and process agreed it seemed that it would be possible to apply EDV's volunteer model to Vietnam. However, key clauses in the written agreement relating to volunteer involvement in construction were rejected and this point became moot.

During extensive meetings and email exchanges the use of volunteers was discussed at length. However at the final meeting previous verbal agreements were retracted by the PYUFO and countered with a proposal that limited volunteer involvement to between three and five short visits to project sites. This suggestion undermines the entire ethos of EDV and was rejected by the EDV team.

Furthermore, these retractions undermined EDV's confidence in the overall situation in Vietnam. The EDV team was simply not confident that further turn-arounds would not occur once EDV had committed funds. This would result in funds being lost, compromising not only EDV's ability to aid Vietnamese disaster survivors, but the trust of our donors, resulting in long term damage to our ability to respond to disasters worldwide.

Logistical Challenges

Renting an independent house requires a second permit which could take more than two months to secure. Furthermore, due to the political context of Vietnam, this was not possible at all in some regions, meaning that volunteers would have to travel relatively long distances to and from work sites each day.

While, at least initially, EDV would have been without an official HQ, taking out a long term rental on several hotel rooms was an agreed, workable solution.

Buying or renting an independent vehicle would not have been permitted under Vietnamese law initially. An agreed, workable solution was to rent a bus and driver on a monthly basis.

While costs in both cases were not overly prohibitive, they were larger than for independent housing and transport. This meant that EDV had less funding to commit to initial projects.

Project Processes

There were some fundamental concerns in regards to project and financial accountability.

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The proposed working agreement involved EDV transferring funds to PYUFO and then working in close partnership to identify contractors and track expenditure.

During extensive discussions verbal agreements were made that seemed acceptable to all parties. However at the final meeting these agreements were retracted and countered with a proposal that limited EDV involvement to essentially that of a grant making body.

While EDV was more than happy to partner with the authorities, the EDV team was not willing to hand over a large portion of the organisation's set-up funding without EDV's involvement in the construction process.

The retractions and counter proposal by the PYUFO undermined both the ethos of EDV and the team's confidence in their relationship with PYUFO.

Initial Commitment Level

The EDV team was told on several occasions that the more funding a foreign NGO can guarantee, the greater the chance that submitted proposals will be approved.

This presented a challenge as all People's Committees the EDV team met were very keen to obtain funding for the larger projects identified, such as community shelters and schools. However, EDV was only able to initially commit to around EU 4,000 for the construction of three permanent homes.

The intent was then for EDV to begin contacting its network of potential donors and fund-raising more extensively, based on an existing EDV presence in Vietnam.

It seems that if EDV had been able to commit immediately to major construction projects, the authorities would have been more inclined to approve in writing the verbal agreements originally made. In other words, EDV's still relatively small amount of start-up funding was a factor preventing initial deployment.

Conclusions

The outcome of this assessment has proved to be a disappointment to the assessment team and organisation as a whole.

The EDV team visited three affected provinces and identified a huge need for recovery and reconstruction assistance in typhoon affected communities. Furthermore, Vietnam in many ways offered a chance for EDV to demonstrate the larger potential of volunteer-driven disaster response through awareness raising.

For these reasons the EDV team felt that it was worth investing time trying to negotiate solutions to the often major challenges encountered. Many of these challenges related to the specific political context of

Vietnam and trying to apply a highly flexible volunteer model to such an environment. When combined with EDV's currently limited start-up funding this made EDV a "hard-sell" to the relevant authorities.

While it is still somewhat unclear why verbal agreement was originally given and then retracted by the local authorities, the ultimate outcome is unchanged. EDV's final written proposal was rejected and countered with an alternative that presented less risk to the authorities but significant risk to EDV.

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Any deployment undertaken is going to involve challenges, with work sometimes proceeding slowly while more extensive funding is pursued. In a more open environment, starting on a smaller scale and building towards larger projects is less likely to meet objection from authorities. However in Vietnam, EDV needed to be able to commit to major projects from the outset. This was not possible due to financial constraints which undermined the assessment team's ability to negotiate a satisfactory agreement.

Philippines Assessment Technical Report

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Between September and November 2009 the Philippines was hit by three major typhoons which caused widespread damage and destruction. Overall over 10 million people were reported as affected with 46,000 homes destroyed and another 260,000 damaged.

An assessment team from European Disaster Volunteers (EDV) arrived in the country on 19th March 2010 to consider the possibility of supporting local recovery efforts through an EDV deployment.

While there was a major need for further international assistance, particularly in regards to housing, many projects could not proceed because of ongoing negotiations surrounding relocation with the Philippine government. EDV were therefore unable to engage in housing projects.

To counter this, the EDV team identified other potential projects with a community based organisation near Manila. However, the main project under consideration was extremely time critical due the approaching rainy season and a lack of funding, combined with on-going delays, prevented EDV from securing its long term viability.

The rest of this report will elaborate on EDV's experiences in the Philippines and detail how the decision not to deploy was reached.

Summary of Activities

On 22nd March the EDV team met with the National Secretariat for Social Action-Justice (NASSA), otherwise known as the Caritas Filipinas Foundation, in Metro Manila and with them visited affected areas in the neighbouring province of Rizal.

On 23rd March the EDV team met with representatives of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who provided a briefing on the overall situation in the country.

On 24th March the EDV team again traveled to the province of Rizal and met with a community based organisation called Buklod Tao to appraise their existing strategy for disaster risk reduction and recovery in the San Mateo area.

Between 25th and 29th March the EDV team traveled to the city of Baguio, in the province of Benguet, to meet with the local branch of NASSA. During the visit NASSA assisted the EDV team in assessing multiple affected communities in the surrounding area.

While there was significant scope for volunteer involvement in housing projects, almost all of these were stalled due to relocation issues. These issues will be explained in more detail later in this report. The EDV team therefore concluded that the most practical starting point for operations would be a partnership with Buklod Tao.

Buklod Tao was keen to engage in such a partnership but given the unusual nature of EDV's model, eg.

bringing international volunteers to live and work in the community, they were also anxious to understand the related legal implications of that partnership.

Page | The EDV team therefore spent the next two weeks engaged in meetings with a wide range of parties to understand regulations surrounding working in the Philippines. These included three further meetings with
21 Buklod Tao and the local authorities in San Mateo, three visits to the regulatory body for International Non-Governmental Organisations in the Philippines which is called the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and a meeting with Hands on Manila to discuss the practicalities of using international volunteers in the country.

By 16th April a practical working arrangement appeared to have been reached. This involved EDV providing funding for a riverbank reinforcement project and Buklod Tao leading and funding a "food-for-work" volunteer programme for local residents so that work could commence immediately.

An immediate start was essential to secure project viability before the rainy season began and the water level began to rise, which would submerge areas to be reinforced. International volunteers would be welcome to join efforts as soon as they could be recruited and EDV would officially register as an international NGO as work progressed.

With most major points agreed the EDV team moved to the San Mateo area on the 16th in order to finalise details and begin preparations for actual work to begin.

Sadly during discussions leading up to 23rd April it became evident to the EDV team that the resources available to Buklod Tao to feed local volunteers were insufficient to sustain the essential early work on the riverbank project. With EDV's limited financial resources EDV was also unable to pick up the slack and fund this essential part of the project.

With critical work unable to proceed quickly, EDV was forced to conclude that the riverbank project would be highly unlikely to continue over the rainy season. This would have meant that until the rainy season ended in November or December 2010, there was little or no potential for EDV and its volunteers to make an impact.

This section has provided only a brief outline of the issues which forced EDV to leave the Philippines. The remainder of this report expands up on the challenges encountered as well as the situation on the ground as a whole.

General Observations & Outcomes

Leaving the Philippines was a difficult decision for EDV's assessment team because in all areas visited there was a major need for further assistance. Sadly, with EDV's still relatively limited resources these needs proved impossible to address. This section details the conditions the EDV assessment team encountered on the ground and how those conditions contributed to EDV's decision not to deploy.

Northern Luzon Specifics

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In the mountainous areas around the city of Baguio in Northern Luzon widespread destruction, due to landslides, was still highly visible. In many observed cases entire communities have been totally wiped out. Thousands are still living in displacement camps and are unable to return to their former land due to unstable geology. The only option for these affected families is relocation to safer land.

While many major relocation/housing projects are in the pipeline they are currently stalled due to protracted negotiations surrounding relocation sites. This situation was seriously exacerbated due to national elections in May 2010 and a related embargo on further governmental assistance and negotiations during the campaign period. As a result, other NGOs consulted felt that relocation sites were unlikely to be ready for several further months at least.

While limited housing projects were due to commence in early April, their highly remote location made involvement by EDV volunteers impractical. The sites visited were all 2-3 hours from even a minor town and had extremely limited public transport services. It would have therefore been necessary to station small remote teams onsite.

However stationing volunteers in such rural locations presented EDV with an unacceptable safety risk. EDV lacked the resources to purchase dedicated four wheel drive vehicles and road closures, due to further rains and landslides, were a continuous hazard. Subsequently, even minor injuries could have presented a major threat to volunteer safety as access to medical attention could have been prevented for extended periods.

Further while there was scope for these limited projects to begin in early April, they were isolated examples. The greatest need for most affected communities was appropriate relocation sites to counter the extreme landslide risk that continues to threaten them.

However, this is an extremely complicated and politically charged situation that is proving difficult for even the largest and most established humanitarian agencies to address. While EDV could easily have supported actual construction once it was underway, this was dependent on the availability of safe land. Without funds to purchase land, or the ability to advocate with government on this issue, EDV was unable to make an impact in Northern Luzon.

Manila & Rizal Province Specifics

The metropolitan areas around Manila and in Rizal had, at least on the surface, returned almost to normal. However many affected families were living in high risk areas before the typhoons and, as informal settlers, recovery has subsequently been limited to a return to a precarious position similar to that before the disasters.

Makeshift houses, located in highly flood prone areas, have been repaired or reconstructed in a way that will undoubtedly collapse again in any major storm. In many cases relocation sites were also under negotiation for such households but these were facing similar delays to the sites in Northern

Luzon. Further, many families are reluctant to move as proposed sites are often very far from established dwellings and available, albeit limited, employment.

However, the EDV team did identify a community based organisation, called Buklod Tao that was working extremely hard to help reduce the risks and hardships faced by typhoon affected families. In Buklod Tao the EDV team found a fantastic opportunity to contribute to this effort while also helping to develop the capacity of an established, local NGO. So the EDV team concluded that working with Buklod Tao was the best route forward in the Philippines.

Potential Projects Identified with Buklod Tao

This section provides more detail about potential projects identified with Buklod Tao.

Buklod Tao, which means "the people coming together" in the Filipino language of Tagalog, is a community based organisation which was founded around sixteen years ago. Their members are from the Barangay, or village, of Banaba in the San Mateo region of Rizal province. Over the years they have become an incorporated organisation and with relatively small amounts of funding have been incredibly active in the community.

Banaba is surrounded on three sides by rivers, making it highly prone to flooding. Buklod Tao's disaster related projects have included the development of evacuation procedures and the design and provision of rescue boats. Their methods proved highly effective in the 2009 typhoons as despite being hit by over ten metres of flood water, which caused major destruction to property, no lives were lost in the community.

However, annual floods are severely eroding the riverbanks, causing the frequent collapse of houses. While this is threatening informal settlers in the most immediate term, the entire community is in danger of literally being washed away if the problem is not addressed in the long term.

To counter this Buklod Tao have begun the first steps of a comprehensive riverbank reinforcement project. Through engaging with multiple partners, such as local government agencies and university community service projects, they have begun installing *Gambion Baskets* along the most vulnerable stretches of riverbank.

These baskets are 6ft x 3ft x 3ft rebar cages which are welded together and enclosed in *cyclone wire* before being installed in the riverbank. Once in place they are filled with rocks to form a substantial flood control wall. The bottom layer is cemented into concrete foundations and further layers can then be added, in a brick-like manner, to protect higher sections of river bank.

Buklod Tao is pursuing an ambitious plan to protect 3km of river bank in this manner. They are also working with other NGOs to develop over five hectares of *urban container gardens* on the completed wall. This will provide highly needed nutrition and livelihood opportunities for local residents who are often unable to afford fresh vegetables.

Initial work began in January and February of 2010 to demonstrate the concept but was then halted due to a lack of resources. Buklod Tao are pursuing further funding but were very anxious to

continue work in the interim as the dry season has seen extremely low water levels. By completing a more significant section of foundation and a base layer of baskets work could then continue even during the rainy season.

This is a key point: to secure work during the rainy season both Buklod Tao and EDV recognised that initial work needed to be completed before the rains began in June.

To complete this early work and secure the project over the rainy season, EDV proposed to provide initial funding for around 200m of baskets. While the work would essentially have been simple, it was also highly labour intensive and could easily have provided work for large numbers of relatively unskilled volunteers.

As noted however, it was vital that work began immediately. Without a completed foundation and base layer work would have stopped for many months while the project site was submerged by higher water levels. While EDV was confident of recruiting volunteers once the project was running it was also essential that local volunteers be engaged in the interim before EDV could recruit large numbers.

Community members were keen to work, but their own poverty levels made totally unpaid involvement impractical for them. Buklod Tao therefore proposed providing food-for-work for residents for as long as possible. While EDV could have pursued further funding to help financially support this initiative in the future, EDV's limited resources made this impossible at the start of the project.

Once the riverbank project was established there were also several options for further projects with Buklod Tao. The most immediate example was the provision of further rescue boats. Buklod Tao has managed to construct around six to date and these have proved invaluable in saving lives.

Each boat, constructed from moulded fibre-glass, costs only around EU200 and takes around a week to manufacture. Buklod Tao is very keen to obtain more and was happy to welcome international volunteers to participate in the construction/painting process. They have already been pursuing boat sponsorship opportunities and this presented EDV with many possible options for a "buy-a-boat" type fundraising model, with donors and/or volunteers designating a logo or name for new boats.

However, while this would have formed a great secondary project, in isolation it wasn't substantial enough to sustain a deployment on its own. This meant that securing the riverbank project to run in conjunction with rescue boat provision remained EDV's first priority.

Challenges to the Gambion Basket Project

As outlined above, the Gambion Basket river bank reinforcement project had the potential to make a major long term impact on the lives of Banaba residents, but its success over the next year depended entirely upon laying foundations and a base layer very quickly.

Bringing in international volunteers takes time, and that delay would have slowed the project too much to allow EDV and Buklod Tao to lay foundations and a base layer before the rains arrived. So

Buklod Tao proposed their food-for-work programme until EDV could secure larger volunteer numbers.

Sadly it soon became clear that Buklod Tao's "food-for-work" resources were extremely limited. This meant that local volunteers were highly unlikely to be able to do the work necessary to secure the foundation and base layer, crippling the project over the rainy season.

EDV did consider the possibility of funding more "food-for-work", but after looking into costs it became clear that EDV's resources were also too limited to provide financial support for this aspect of the project in addition to providing the materials. However, without a significant number of volunteers available from the outset there was insufficient time to complete the essential early work. As a result all further work would have been halted for many months.

The stopping of work during the rainy season would not only leave volunteers redundant, but would also leave EDV unable to make any long term contribution to Buklod Tao's disaster response projects and Banaba's ability to resist and recover from disaster.

If EDV had more money to fund food-for-work for the locals the project would have remained viable. However, without additional funding EDV were forced to withdraw from the project. Therefore a fundamental reason that EDV could not deploy was a lack of funding.

Conclusions

The outcome of the Philippine assessment has proved to be a disappointment to the EDV assessment team and organisation as a whole.

The EDV team visited three affected provinces and identified a huge need for recovery, reconstruction, and risk reduction assistance in multiple typhoon affected communities. Sadly the majority of housing projects were delayed due to relocation issues and this situation was unfortunately compounded by a national election - an event which occurs once every six years.

Where housing projects could proceed the extreme logistical challenges made pursuing them impossible for an organisation of EDV's limited financial resources.

In Buklod Tao EDV found a fantastic opportunity to engage international volunteers in highly sustainable projects. Its members are highly motivated, organised and have a clear vision of how they wish to drive forward their own recovery and reduce future risks. They are already making a significant impact and given access to additional resources, they could undoubtedly drastically improve the conditions of many typhoon affected families.

For these reasons the EDV team explored every possible possibility of beginning a partnership with them. Unfortunately, EDV's limited start-up funding proved insufficient to enable this partnership to be cemented.

Any deployment is going to involve challenges, with work sometimes proceeding slowly while more extensive funding is pursued. Sadly given the urgent nature of starting the riverbank reinforcement project, and this project's centrality to overall operations, any delays at the outset would have compromised EDV's

ability to make even a minor impact over the rainy season.

Timing proved to be a significant hurdle to possible EDV operations in the Philippines. Had the assessment team arrived in the country one or two months earlier the riverbank project would easily have proved viable. Alternatively, arriving several months later would have enabled EDV to participate in the more accessible housing projects.

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Ultimately if EDV had a greater amount of start-up funding these obstacles could have been overcome.

With significantly more funding, to obtain vehicles, volunteers could have begun work on some of the more remote housing sites in Northern Luzon.

Alternatively, a smaller amount of additional funding would have allowed EDV to support Buklod Tao's "food-for-work" initiative. This would have allowed vital sections of the riverbank project to be completed before the rainy season, and thus for the project to continue throughout the year. Sadly, with the financial resources available EDV were unable to pursue a deployment in the Philippines.

While EDV is obviously very disappointed by this turn of events, we also see every challenge as an opportunity to learn and grow as an organisation. In that vein, we've also included a report outlining the many opportunities for organisational learning that we identified in Asia so that EDV can move forward from our Asia Pacific experience as a stronger organisation.

Opportunities for Organisational Learning

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As stated throughout this report, leaving Asia was a disappointment, especially for the assessment team who saw the needs of the communities they visited first-hand. The previous sections of this report have outlined the specific facts which eventually forced EDV to conclude that deployment was not only unworkable, but also irresponsible.

With these facts established, this section moves on to answer the question of what EDV can learn from Asia in general and about responding to typhoons in particular.

The discussion of that question is broken down into several key areas: disaster type and geography of its impacts, disaster frequency and vulnerability of the poor, registration requirements, and our delayed response. It should be noted that although this document addresses each of these issues separately for easier discussion, they are actually linked and all combined to create an untenable situation which would have required much greater start-up funding to overcome.

Although we could not deploy, Asia has much to tell EDV about how to respond to typhoons and floods, the politics of disaster zones, and the realities of recurring disasters. This document seeks to articulate these lessons so that they can be incorporated into EDV's future responses to typhoons and floods.

Disaster Type and Geography of Impacts

EDV's assessment team has had significant experience in other disaster zones, but this was their first time responding to typhoons and subsequent floods. The different nature of the disasters' impacts presented many challenges that EDV had not fully anticipated. Moving forward, it is important that EDV appreciates and learns from these differences so that the organisation can be better placed to respond to future typhoon, hurricane, and flood disasters.

The assessment team's past experience was gained in both Thailand after the 2004 tsunami and Peru after a 2007 earthquake in the city of Pisco, Peru. You can read more about their past experiences at <http://www.edvolunteers.org/past-experience>. Both of these disasters presented highly concentrated areas of destruction and as a result volunteer driven organisations had many potential projects within a relatively close geographical area. This close geography made it possible to undertake large reconstruction projects and lower-cost work, such as rubble removal, which required only volunteers and tools from an established base in the vicinity.

In contrast, the typhoons in Asia affected large areas but left long-term damage localised in small pockets. Consequently while many feasible projects were identified in both countries, these were often separated by large distances and difficult terrain. They were also often surrounded by areas that were either unaffected or had already recovered to a large extent.

Distance and geography presented major logistical and financial challenges. They both slowed down the overall assessment process and made a long-term deployment much more difficult and expensive to develop.

For example, investment in infrastructure and volunteer head quarters is effectively cheaper and more financially manageable when it services multiple nearby projects, rather than individual isolated projects. In effect, project isolation required multiple bases. Further, the isolated project sites would have required a much greater financial investment initially as many projects required not only tools and materials to be purchased but also dedicated vehicles.

The fact that potential projects were often surrounded by areas which were either unaffected or already recovered also presented challenges. Without obvious, widespread damage to give an explicit reason for a volunteer presence EDV was required to undertake official registration with the national government. This issue, discussed further in Registration Requirements below, introduced long delays which became increasingly difficult to absorb financially and eventually undermined EDV's ability to deploy.

In several instances EDV was very close to overcoming these challenges, and with more funding a response would have been possible. To avoid similar issues, any future attempt to operate in similar circumstances would be more successful if pursued sooner after the disaster rather than as a Delayed Response, as will be returned to later. Alternatively, greater financial reserves should be available so that logistical costs would not be prohibitive.

Disaster Frequency and Vulnerability of the Poor

The typhoons of 2009 were extreme in magnitude and in many ways atypical, as discussed in the "Essential Background" section on page four. Even so, both Vietnam and the Philippines are affected by up to twenty typhoons a year and the recurring nature of these typhoons often creates a more "business-as-usual" attitude and, in some quarters, a reduced sense of urgency to address their long term effects.

Furthermore, the impacts of the typhoons vary widely between different groups. For example, the annual flooding around Manila affects mainly informal settlers who, due to poverty, are forced to live in highly vulnerable slum-like areas along rivers and other waterways. In contrast, more affluent surrounding areas are less affected and/or recover much more quickly.

Long-term typhoon damage in the slums is often less visible to other sections of the population, which also contributed to a reduced sense of urgency in some quarters. Also, the presence of informal settlers is controversial to some residents and also to certain authorities who are in favour of relocation rather than the provision of any assistance.

This stands in stark contrast to EDV's experience in both Thailand and Peru, where a more unusual, catastrophic disaster had suddenly caused long-term devastation to the majority of people within a given area. While social divisions did of course exist in Thailand and Peru, the singularly devastating disasters created a greater sense of urgency and openness to outside intervention within the overall population. This translated into more opportunities for international volunteer involvement.

The more frequent nature of disasters and resulting attitudes to them forced EDV to undertake official registration with the national government to avoid legal problems. As discussed in

Registration Requirements below, this introduced long delays which became increasingly difficult to absorb financially and eventually undermined EDV's ability to deploy.

The recurring nature of disasters obviously doesn't make a response any less meaningful. In fact EDV would argue that in disaster prone countries, long-term, volunteer-driven responses have more potential to make a sustainable impact. However, for EDV's first deployment these challenges proved a major obstacle.

Any future attempt to operate in similar circumstances would undoubtedly be more successful if pursued sooner after the disaster rather than as a Delayed Response, as will be returned to later. Additionally, greater financial reserves should be available so that delays could be more easily absorbed.

Registration Requirements

In both Thailand after the 2004 Asian tsunami and Peru after the 2007 earthquake in Pisco, none of the volunteer driven organisations whom EDV founders gained experience with were officially registered as international NGOs.

Instead these organisations all worked with the approval of relevant local authorities in areas of highly concentrated destruction. These types of informal working arrangements were possible partly because the disasters were perceived as unusual and distinct. This in turn created a greater sense of urgency and a more open environment for international organisations.

In contrast, in Vietnam and the Philippines, while the typhoons were atypical in that they had unusual effects, the storms themselves were not unusual. Further, project sites were often surrounded by large areas of relative normality. This meant that without the driving force of highly visible, catastrophic damage which affected all residents the environment was more restrictive and informal working arrangements harder to achieve. Instead, particularly in Vietnam, EDV was obligated to officially register with the national government to be able to operate effectively, or even at all.

While EDV were happy to pursue official registration the processes were often lengthy, complicated and expensive. Further, while the EDV team was carrying necessary, official documents with them, most of these proved invalid without certification at Vietnamese/Philippine embassies in the UK.

Significant in-country negotiations with government officials and coordination with EDV's UK directors were therefore necessary before any projects be attempted. Consequently the EDV team had to expend a lot of time and energy dealing with legalities that continually delayed the possibility of deployment.

Given the time critical nature of the proposed riverbank project, discussed in the Philippine assessment report, these delays were one of several factors which contributed to EDV's eventual withdrawal.

If in the future EDV did attempt a Delayed Response to other recurring disasters, registration

requirements should be researched and also prepared in advance, rather than in-country during any assessment. With uncertainty about legalities removed, effort could then be focused on purely operational questions and unnecessary delays could be avoided.

Delayed Response

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EDV had only just registered as a charity when multiple disasters struck the Asia-Pacific region between September and November of 2009. In the immediate aftermath of these disasters EDV did not have the financial capacity to launch a deployment.

However, based on past experience in Thailand following the 2004 Asian tsunami and Peru following a 2007 earthquake the EDV directors reasoned that if enough funding could be secured within a few months then it should still be possible to pursue a delayed response with operations beginning several months after the disasters. Such a delayed deployment was not viewed as problematic as EDV was seeking to address long term issues of disaster vulnerability rather than limiting operations to only the immediate impacts of the disasters.

By February 2010 EDV believed that enough start-up funding had been raised to secure initial operations. However, this start-up funding was still limited. While EDV always planned to develop its own long-term projects, we had assumed that there would also be at least some lower-cost work available in the interim. Based on past experience examples of such lower-cost work included on-going clean-up or the assembly of temporary homes. It was reasoned that such work would form a cushion while larger EDV projects were being planned, negotiated and funded.

However, this overall strategy ultimately proved to be flawed for two important reasons.

First, our delayed response meant that by the time EDV began assessing Vietnam and the Philippines in February and March respectively, there was little, if any, low-cost work identifiable. This meant that the only option was to pursue large, reconstruction projects from the outset. However, as funding was limited many of these projects were simply too expensive for EDV to take on immediately.

Second, our delayed response meant that the window of opportunity to deploy international volunteers in a quick and flexible manner had already closed. Disasters often provide this window of opportunity in their immediate, chaotic aftermath as local capacity is more obviously overwhelmed.

Had EDV been able to engage volunteers to establish a foot-hold during that window, the transition to later, longer-term projects would have been easier. Missing this window of opportunity also contributed to EDV having to undertake official registration, as discussed above, before beginning any project work.

Delayed responses may be possible in some cases, such as when the disaster is perceived as unusual and results in singularly catastrophic destruction, like with an earthquake or tsunami. However this Asia-Pacific assessment report has shown that delayed responses can prove hugely problematic in other cases, such as recurring typhoons and floods.

Conclusion

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While there is a significant opportunity for organisational learning in considering each of the areas discussed above separately, it's also important to recognise that all of these areas were not actually isolated on the ground. In fact, all of the issues discussed in this section are connected, and when combined with limited start-up funding, proved to make a deployment untenable.

For example, had EDV possessed more start-up funding then the highly isolated nature of projects in mountainous areas would have been less of a problem as infrastructure and logistical costs would have been less prohibitive.

As these costs were prohibitive EDV was forced to seek projects in more accessible, and therefore more visible, areas. Further, due to the nature of the disasters impacts, these more accessible areas were often surrounded by areas that were either unaffected or already largely recovered. This in turn meant that international volunteer involvement, which is a key part of EDV's strategy for supporting disaster affected communities, was much more controversial and required much more extensive and delicate negotiations before any work can even be attempted.

Of course, many of these challenges were compounded by the fact that EDV were pursuing a delayed response, which was in turn complicated by the recurring nature of typhoons and floods in the countries assessed.

Had EDV been able to deploy volunteers earlier then involvement in lower-cost projects would have proved possible and this could have been leveraged to pursue donations for larger, reconstruction projects.

Additionally, EDV could have established a foothold so that official registration could have been pursued in parallel to actual work, rather than before projects began. Further, had the disasters been perceived as more unusual and singularly catastrophic it is likely that the "window of opportunity" for flexible involvement would have stayed open for longer.

Instead, the more "business-as-usual" attitude in some quarters reinforced EDV's obligation to pursue official registration from the outset. This in turn added lengthy and expensive delays which eventually made any deployment untenable.

For example, as discussed in the Philippines assessment report on pages 24 and 25, the proposed riverbank project became impossible to secure before the rainy season as we had too few resources to leverage. Without all the delays discussed in this section, we would have had more time to recruit volunteers and appeal for further funding. This would have secured the project and allowed EDV to launch a long-term deployment.

EDV is committed to the sustainable recovery of disaster affected communities, which often implies long-term partnership, but attempting to operate only long-term without an earlier presence, or the presence of an established partner, has proved very difficult without much more significant start-up funding. Such funding would have allowed larger projects to be undertaken from the outset or lengthy delays to have been absorbed more easily. Alternatively, an established partner could have helped smooth the way for EDV involvement.

This is especially true when the disaster is not perceived as unusual or singularly catastrophic as local politics and attitudes can prove to be a major challenge to a deployment. In such cases much more attention needs to be paid to legalities and registration requirements in advance, rather than in country during assessment.

Page | Moving forward, EDV's future deployment plans need to recognise and reflect the differences between
32 recurring and singularly catastrophic disasters. Although both types will present challenges, the latter is likely to provide more flexibility for international organisations to operate over the long-term. This proved particularly critical for an organisation like EDV which uses an unusual volunteer model, and had limited resources for its first major attempt at a deployment.

This is not to say the attempt was not justified however. Had more start-up funding been available many of the challenges could easily have been overcome. Further, as noted above, the recurring nature of disasters doesn't make a long-term response any less important. If anything the opposite is true. So, despite our inability to deploy on this occasion there is both the need and potential for long-term volunteer involvement in future responses to recurring disasters.

Summary and Conclusions

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This Asia Assessment Final Report has sought to provide a comprehensive, detailed picture of our assessment and how that assessment revealed that given our relatively limited financial resources a deployment in Asia would not have positively impacted the lives of disaster survivors and therefore been financially irresponsible.

As discussed in "Essential Background" on page four, we responded to the disasters which struck Asia and the Pacific in the autumn of 2009 because our research and experience indicated a need for long-term aid which would reduce the vulnerability of communities in an extremely disaster prone part of the world. The typhoons which struck Vietnam and the Philippines particularly drew our attention because these countries are struck by up to twenty typhoons every year and are consequently particularly vulnerable to disasters.

Our assessment team, made up of Executive Director Andrew Chaggar and Media and Marketing Director Emma Taylor, spent almost three months exploring how EDV might be able to respond to these disasters in a way that would reduce community vulnerability for the inevitable 2010 storms. The team has produced technical reports on both countries detailing their day-to-day activities and findings.

These findings confirmed what EDV's research and experience indicated prior to assessment - that many communities are indeed trapped in a cycle of losing their homes and livelihoods in the yearly disasters and could benefit hugely from long-term, volunteer-driven aid. Further, while on the surface many communities have recovered, the recovery is only skin deep. The underlying vulnerabilities remain.

These findings demonstrate that although we did not deploy EDV's understanding of the need for long-term support in both Vietnam and the Philippines was essentially correct.

However while assessment revealed need, it also revealed huge challenges which eventually crippled our ability to deploy. In the end it became clear that deployment was impossible without significantly more start-up funding than EDV possessed.

That funding insufficiency has its roots in a number of factors which interacted to create a situation where affordable projects were few and very legally complex. With these affordable projects out of reach, the remaining projects required large amounts of start-up funding which EDV simply didn't possess. The details of these projects in both Vietnam and the Philippines are contained in the technical reports on those countries on pages seven and twenty, respectively.

The factors which introduced the very high degree of legal complication centre on the nature of the disasters and the way in which they impacted both Vietnam and the Philippines. Some of the most important factors are outlined in the bullet points below. As these factors also provide excellent opportunities for EDV to learn and grow, they are more fully explained in the Opportunities for Organisational Learning section of this report on page 27 and also elaborated on in the individual reports on Vietnam and the Philippines.

- **Time scale:** When unusual and extremely destructive disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis occur, there is an explicit need for aid for many months, even years, after the event. This means that a delayed deployment which begins many months after the initial disaster will likely find fertile

ground. As our directors' prior experience has all been in earthquake and tsunami zones, we anticipated that the disaster zones in Vietnam and the Philippines would operate on a similar model. This was not the case. In a disaster zone caused by recurring disasters, like the yearly typhoons which affect Vietnam and the Philippines, delayed responses are much more complex and are not guaranteed to encounter the unconditional welcome afforded to international aid groups after more unusual disasters.

- **Attitude toward disaster:** Interlinked with the above point, recurring disasters are not perceived in the same way as the unusual and singularly catastrophic disasters our founding members had responded to previously. In the case of recurring disasters, the urgency to address their long-term effects is simply not as apparent as in a catastrophic disaster zone. This business as usual attitude combined with cultural context can create a difficult operating environment.
- **Nature of the disaster impacts:** The catastrophic disasters which our founding members had encountered before were geographically concentrated, presenting an area of highly concentrated damage. Typhoons, on the other hand, can affect a very large area with longer term damage isolated in small pockets. This presents a difficult and expensive operating model.
- **The Need for Greater Start-up Funding:** Our estimates of how much start-up funding we would need were based on our research prior to assessment and our founding members' years of experience. However, much of this experience proved difficult to relate to the nature of the disasters in Asia. This led to an underestimation of how much funding we would need in Asia. In the end, the start-up funding we had was insufficient. We remain convinced that, with more funding, we would have been able to deploy in Asia.
- **Registration and Legal Requirements:** Our delayed response, the nature of the disasters, and the attitudes toward those disasters resulted in an operating environment where the authorities did not afford us the flexibility our founding members had enjoyed on prior deployments in other disaster zones. This more restrictive environment meant that EDV was obligated to go through a lengthy and expensive registration process which greatly hindered our ability to deploy.

It's important to note that had any of these issues been presented to EDV in isolation, or even if only a pair had been present, deployment would have gone ahead. However, taken together, they made the situation untenable.

In the end, the nature of the disasters led to continuous delays and financial burdens that we did not anticipate. We found ourselves in a situation where had we started any projects we would have run out of funds to continue working after a period of only a few weeks to a month.

This not only would have left volunteers with nothing to do, but also failed to support the disaster affected community. Betraying the trust of survivors not only doesn't translate into a long-term positive impact, but could have actually undermined the community's future willingness to work with international aid groups.

Faced with our inability to provide sustainable support the assessment team made the difficult decision to withdraw from Asia.

Plans for the Future

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While we acknowledge that this is a difficult blow for EDV, we also believe that in withdrawing from Asia we are demonstrating EDV's commitment to sustainable disaster recovery. Our decision to leave Asia was based on the fact that we could not provide meaningful aid that would have left communities better able to meet their own needs. Therefore our presence would not have been useful and could actually have caused harm. Making the decision to leave Asia demonstrates our awareness of the larger issues always present in disaster response.

Further, making this difficult decision also reflects our commitment to honoring our donor's wishes. EDV is committed to investing in projects which will make the most of donated money by putting funds toward sustainable recovery and not just an operational response by EDV. As our funding was insufficient to drive projects which would make a sustainable impact in Asia, any investment would have been equivalent to putting our donors' money toward unsustainable projects and would have an irresponsible use of our funds.

So while donors may be surprised and disappointed that the money they donated to our Asia-Pacific Disaster Recovery appeal has not been used as they had initially hoped, we hope they can take comfort in the fact that their money has not gone toward projects which would have proved unsustainable.

Moving forward from Asia, we are looking into possible responses in other disaster zones which would allow a more flexible and less resource intensive start to operations. We're also tapping into new funding sources, pursuing new advertising and media partnerships to raise awareness about EDV, and continuing to develop our Disaster Awareness scheme which aims to raise awareness about how the choices we make at home affect lives half a world away.

We believe that these on-going schemes and the strengths we showed in Asia will carry EDV forward in good stead. We didn't deploy, but in not deploying we demonstrated a commitment to our mission statement, our goals in disaster response, and our obligation to use our donors' money honestly and responsibly. As these are the foundations of a successful and long-lived charity, we are now moving forward with confidence and excitement.

If you have any questions about the findings in this report or any other aspect of EDV and our Asia assessment, please email executive@europeandisastervolunteers.org.