

CHAPTER III. (as at 10/2)

2) The Post-Emergency Phase: Laying the Foundations for Recovery

The Transition Setting

1. The documentation made available to the Mission frequently makes the point that the national and international response to the Central American crisis has shifted rapidly to rehabilitation and reconstruction concerns, to the point that reminders are repeatedly made that the emergency and need for humanitarian relief are not over.
2. This is understandable. The disaster struck people living in intense poverty and under vulnerable conditions, in areas rendered insecure as a result of population pressures, uncertain land ownership, poor environmental management, etc. As a result, the prevailing view is that programmes should as far as possible address root causes and not merely produce a return to the status quo.
3. While not a complex emergency in the conventional sense, the Central American social and economic scene is thus as complex as any. And since the scale of disaster is a function of structural vulnerabilities, it is not only a natural phenomenon, but to a large extent man-made. It differs from the usual complex emergency only in that the causes are different. As such, the situation on the ground points compellingly to the need for viewing relief and development requirements in an integrated manner.¹

Programming for Rehabilitation and Recovery

4. **Coordination.** With respect to post-emergency programming, the Mission found that UN system coordination under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator was on the whole functioning well in all countries visited. In many ways, the Mitch crisis has helped to strengthen the coordination process. Members of the DMT were in general conscious of the need to provide a unified UN response to the sequels of the disaster and playing a constructive role to this end. This was particularly apparent in Honduras where the impact of the disaster was felt most acutely.
5. Country Teams have well understood how early development considerations impact on relief work and how closely knitted the tasks of saving lives, of protecting vulnerable groups and rebuilding livelihoods are in reality. Rehabilitation and recovery concerns have accordingly immediately come to the fore after the rescue and life-saving phase. Among government agencies, international organisations and NGOs, there is virtually universal recognition that the effects of the disaster, as exceptional a climatic event as it was, were magnified by environmental factors, social inequities and by the exposure of the poorest of the poor who were struck the hardest.

¹) For a more detailed discussion of the relief/development linkage, see Annex 4.

6. **Short and long term impact.** The Mission noted that many agencies, of the government, of the UN and NGOs, are quick to see the benefit of exploiting existing linkages between short and long-term goals. In Guatemala, for example, WFP ceased free food distributions only some ten days after the disaster, using about 60 per cent of the funds allotted for food distribution to mount a food-for-work programme of soil conservation works.
7. For the same reasons they are frequently confronted with underlying political issues whose ultimate resolution remains unclear. In Nicaragua, the use of corrugated roofing supplied by UNDP in the emergency phase for housing reconstruction has in many places run into serious difficulty because of intractable land ownership problems, which are unlikely to be resolved except in a long-term development context. In Honduras, because of the inability to provide land, families displaced by the floods are being relocated from makeshift shelters in schools, which have to be vacated to make place for the resumption of classes, to newly constructed temporary shelter compounds that have all the makings of becoming permanent.
8. While focusing on short-term goals, the programmes presented in the Transitional Appeal encompass medium and long-term objectives, in line with the integrated view of the transition referred to above. Although only a partial response, immediate rehabilitation and reconstruction activities of the Appeal tie in well with ongoing efforts, on the part of all UN agencies, to come to grips with structural development challenges and to support poverty reduction strategies.
9. **Targeting communities.** The national sector programmes being prepared for the Stockholm meeting of the Consultative Group have a given and important place in the overall effort on the path to recovery. At the same time, in the Mission's view, there is a parallel need for developing multi-sector programmes operating at departmental level and targeting communities focusing on local needs in a comprehensive manner and on the participation of the communities themselves. As elsewhere, international and some national NGOs are already adopting this approach.
10. In both Nicaragua and Honduras, a deliberate attempt is however being made by UN agencies to give greater attention to the special needs of municipalities and communities, whose requirements are unlikely to be met through omnibus sector programmes. Programme officers, some of them UNVs, have been out-posted to the most severely affected areas in order to capture locally felt needs and to give a voice to municipal authorities in deciding on priorities.
11. The transition programmes of the Transitional Appeal are however virtually all sector-oriented, and there is little effort to present needs broken down by region or municipality. On present evidence, this runs counter to a clear interest on the part of donors to fund interventions at the local level, where prospects are greater for community participation, for impact and sustainability, and where it is possible to coordinate better the work of UN agencies with those undertaken by municipal authorities and NGOs.

- 12. Civil society.** In all countries, local authorities, the private sector and civil society have played a key role during the emergency and are expected to continue to do so in the future. Some governments make the point that they are trying to involve organisations of civil society in the preparation of sector programmes for the Stockholm meeting. In the Mission's view, the machinery for doing so is however unstructured and tentative. As a result, national coordinating bodies of NGOs are preparing their own sets of programmes for presentation at a parallel meeting of NGOs in Stockholm.
- 13. Other UN system responses.** There has been a variety of other headquarters initiated responses on the part of the UN system that feed into the local processes of rehabilitation and recovery. A preliminary assessment of damages caused by Hurricane Mitch was prepared by UNDP/ECLAC in early December for the Consultative Group meeting convened by IDB in Washington. As a first rapid review, it concentrated on the damage done to the economies of the Central American countries and could not make an in-depth analysis of the social balance-sheet and the pervasive human implications of the disaster.
- 14.** Even earlier on, in November, at the request of the Central American Commission for Environment and Development, UNEP conducted a preliminary assessment of environmental damages in the four countries. This assessment was followed up by an inter-governmental meeting convened by UNEP(?) in Mexico City in late January. (Rogge: Can you complete this para?)
- 15.** Following reports that the landmine situation in Nicaragua had been exacerbated by the displacement of entire mine-fields as a result of the floods, a mission was fielded in late November by the UN Mine Action Service, which recommended that an early effort should be made to reinforce and supplement the mine detection capacities of the Nicaraguan military demining units.
- 16.** Another important contribution to rehabilitation work in Honduras is the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment carried out in January.
- 17.** The account of UN system responses would not be complete without reference to the valuable and effective role played by UNV both in the emergency phase and in the early rehabilitation effort. During the three-month period, November through January, about 200 national volunteers recruited through the local UNV office have been deployed for a variety of tasks, for food distribution, basic information-gathering and surveys, in support of the work carried out by other UN agencies. Several short and long-term projects are being planned for the next period providing for extensive use of national and international UNVs.

The Resource Gap

- 18.** While viewing transition from relief to development as an integrated and continuous effort, the Mission can only confirm that a major funding gaps exist, a point brought

to the Mission's attention by most government agencies consulted, by representatives of civil society, and by the Country Teams.

- 19.** The Inter-Agency Transitional Appeal was intended to fill part of the resource gap. A number of reservations were however expressed in the course of the Mission's visit regarding both the process and the timing of the Appeal. Some believed that it came too late, others thought that it was premature. Rather than being considered as a plus, the coincidence of its launching with donor preparations for the Washington Consultative Group meeting was furthermore judged to have been unfortunate.²
- 20.** It goes without saying that the additional resources appealed for do not represent total requirements. A host of rehabilitation projects are delivered by NGOs under direct bilateral financing. The Mission was informed that in Nicaragua, after the emergency, about 60 per cent of all international assistance were provided through the NGO route. A similar share of post-emergency support is likely to use the same channel or be routed directly to government departments.
- 21.** Several agencies represented on the Country Teams were concerned about the lack of responses to the Appeal. On the part of OCHA, there are also inconsistencies in the tracking of responses. Contributions to rehabilitation work, negotiated separately by donors with UN agencies, are recorded despite the fact that they did not figure in the Appeal. This leads to inflated figures in some areas. Some contributions to UN agencies, on the other hand, that are consistent with or in the spirit of the Appeal, but made before it was launched, are not recorded.
- 22.** The reservations expressed by government entities, UN agencies and donors on the subject of the Transitional Appeal all point to the lack of a sense of ownership. As a result, neither government departments nor participating UN agencies had taken any significant steps to press requests presented in the Appeal with donor representatives.

²) For a more detailed discussion of the Transitional Appeal, see Annex 5