



Evaluation of the Response to Hurricane Dean in Jamaica, St. Lucia and Dominica

Executive Summary

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation

June 2008

Commissioned by: Oxfam GB LAC

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Executive summary

In 2007, Hurricane Dean (category 4 with sustained wind of 150 mph), made landfall in Jamaica on August 19th 2007 leaving a trail of damage along the Southern coast. According to initial reports, as many as 300,000 people were temporarily displaced by Dean. The communities most affected are located in the southern part of the island that was impacted by hurricanes Emily, Ivan, and Wilma in 2004 and 2005. On St. Lucia and Dominica, the hurricane made landfall on August 17th causing widespread damage to the agricultural sector. Most of the damage was caused by the hurricane and tropical storm winds but there were several areas where flooding occurred. The banana crop is the main agricultural activity in both islands and farmers are highly dependent on the benefit from this crop. The majority of them are certified and socially organized as banana Fair Trade farmers. Non-banana farmers were also affected as vegetable crops and animal pens were destroyed.

This evaluation carried out after the six-month programmes have closed was to look at the following areas:

- To review the project design and implementation
- To identify and document innovative and good practices
- To identify persistent weaknesses (particularly in internal systems) for organisational learning

The evaluation was carried out by semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus groups in the three countries with a variety of stakeholders. The evaluator talked to all staff in the Barbados office, four staff in the regional centre, one HSP and one contract staff and in the countries three government staff, 16 partner staff, 12 volunteers and 67 women and 25 men from the affected populations.

On the whole, although the implementation was late, the response went some way to meeting people's needs and must be seen as partially successful. It is always important to note the psychological aspect of providing assistance to people who may not have expected it. Certainly all the participants of the focus groups expressed satisfaction and it was only when pushed, that they commented on services or goods received and made suggestions for improvements.

Accountability was more by default than design and must be strengthened in any future responses. While there is good rapport between partners, extension workers and volunteers and the affected population, there is no mechanism for complaints from the partner to the Barbados office. If there had been, it may have been easier to deal with the managerial concerns faced in varying degrees in all three countries.

Having been asked to look at weaknesses, it would appear that HR, finance and logistics are the common areas. As the Hurricane Ivan response was led by the region and HD and as there does not appear to have been an evaluation it is difficult to assess if the weaknesses are persistent. This current response was therefore a good opportunity for the ESC office to identify constraints and to find ways of solving them. Certainly both the clumsy financial system and the lengthy and costly procurement of fairly simple items need to be examined and refined.

The vegetable seeds distribution did tide people over until such time as they could recover their normal activities and was deemed to be appropriate by almost all interviewees. However, given the time and cost of importing the commodities and the lateness of the response, one would question the cost effectiveness and cost-benefit of such an intervention. It is definitely worth taking the time to explore other possibilities that could be carried out quickly and with minimum input. The same could be said for the latrines in Jamaica. Transport costs are on the rise and anything that can be done to reduce expenses should be considered.

There is huge potential for preparedness and mitigation especially in Jamaica. Hurricanes will occur in the future and much could be done to have systems and plans in place beforehand. There was a great deal of time wasted collecting information, designing services and procuring commodities, all of which could have been sorted out during “peace time.”

Recommendations

Jamaica – Public health

- Use the PHE HSP in region to assess latrine designs and to produce suitable options for different areas of Jamaica that conform to Ministry regulations and beneficiary needs
- Determine before an emergency what hygiene messages to use so that time is not wasted doing KAP surveys
- Use the PHPs more for community mobilisation and in preparedness planning for example, train them in assessment techniques
- Explore possibilities for Cash for Work in urban settings with partners and beneficiaries and make a plan that is realistic for the context. Do this before an emergency so that the proposal makes it clear whether this is just a clean up or it is really a cash injection into the community
- Investigate shelter issues such as a survey of extent of Hurricane Dean damage,¹ calculate the cost of simple shelter kits, identify other players and map the gaps as part of mitigation

Windwards – livelihoods

- If funding allows, do a small sample size survey of banana and non-banana farmers in order to determine whether seeds was really the cost effective and efficient way of providing support or whether a straight cash grant would have been better. This survey could be carried out by extension workers
- Have a contingency plan for the islands (in line with the government plan when published) and (if going for this alternative):
 - have a list of suitable seed varieties, pesticides and suppliers in country. Work with the NFTO, WINFA and extension workers to have a strategy for vegetable planting that is adhered to by all expatriate staff
 - Give farmers more of a choice. Make the package and the cash for work slightly higher than the cash grant to make it more attractive and monitor usage. Verify compatibility with ECHO requirements

¹ By using a sample size, this need not be extensive but would give an idea for future responses. It could be combined with the livelihoods survey proposed in point one

- Stagger distribution – better planning – maybe zone distribution with different seeds in different districts – liaise with Ministry of Trade
- Investigate shelter issues such as a survey of extent of Hurricane Dean damage, calculate the cost of simple shelter kits, identify other players and map the gaps as part of mitigation

Data collection

Learning points

- KAP studies should be used with caution and with a definite aim. If information for health messaging can be obtained more quickly elsewhere than a KAP study is not relevant. If one is used, it should be repeated to measure impact although in a six-month programme this is probably not very relevant
- Socio-economic as well as demographic data are useful for beneficiary selection in all countries given the fact that remittances play a role in household economies
- Focus groups to measure beneficiary satisfaction are good practice especially if held at intervals during the implementation

Recommendation

- Do a baseline survey in “peacetime” if funding allows using socio-economic data to map vulnerability
- Do not carry out KAP surveys in a six-month programme, obtain information from the Ministry of Health and community focus groups instead
- Carry out focus group discussions every two months during a response to measure beneficiary satisfaction and to get feedback

Accountability

Learning point

Oxfam encourages community consultation and participation but this can be difficult if results are needed quickly. It is better to have had that discussion before the emergency so both parties are clear on selection. We need to avoid fragmentation of existing community structures

Recommendations

- Use existing networks (church services, community groups, schools) to disseminate information about the programme
- Use the PHPs as community mobilisers to give out information and to assist in selection
- Post beneficiary lists for all to see and encourage feedback on the suitability of candidates
- Having feedback mechanisms in place for partners as well as the affected population will improve working relationships – this should be the name and contact details for one specific person in the Barbados office with a record of how the complaint was resolved

Management issues including working with partners

- Explore ways of getting Oxfam registered in the three countries if there is a plan to do some preparedness work or responds to future emergencies
- Assessment of partners before an emergency and a documented discussion as to abilities, areas of expertise and roles and responsibilities. Also assess support systems and ensure that partner staff are conversant with Oxfam systems before a response – for example, make sure partners know which reporting format to use and stick to it
- Second an accountant to the partner during a response and embed them in the organisation to work along side partner staff. Have a contingency plan with possible secondments or short-term contracts
- Explore ways of providing better logistics support in-country either by training to partners, short-term contracts or having lists of possible suppliers and transporters
- Use the Partner Financial management tools for tracking and monitoring
- Put systems in place to performance manage expatriate staff at a distance and set up a feedback system for complaints from national staff
- Do proper inductions so that all new short-term staff know the systems and formats and performance manage the usage. If not already in place, have an induction pack and timetable with responsibilities (stating which points need to be covered) for each member of the Barbados office staff

Preparedness

- Update the Jamaica contingency plan to make it practical and a useful management tool; include list of useful contacts with a priority top three for “first port of call.” Include practical advice on logistics, suppliers and goods available. Do the same for Windwards.
- Work towards the partners taking over the management of a Category 3 Response in the next X number of years. Have an agreed plan with milestones
- In Jamaica, work with S-Corner on low-cost mitigation if funding allows; this would include roof repairs, training on hurricane proof buildings, latrines for evacuation centres, assessment training and other issues that may arise

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First published online by Oxfam GB in 2010.

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