

# **Comes the Subtle Change -A Narrative on Conducting Programme Review with an Eye on Unanticipated Results-**

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**Abstracts:** *In the aftermath of 2005 massive earthquake in northern Pakistan, a huge programme with a financial outlay of approximately US\$5 billion with the support of international community and national, bilateral and multilateral partners was launched. It was spread over nine affected districts with a population of around 3.5 million. The Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) gained insights and learned quite a few important lessons by conducting its first programme review in 2006. It was not a stand-alone exercise, but part of a comprehensive system devised by the Knowledge Management team to evaluate ERRA programme, resulted in producing 8 district baseline studies, 2 programme reviews and 4 sectoral case studies. On the personal side, benefitting from a mutually trusting relationship, the team made ingress into the social arena where a subtle change beyond the control of the programme was taking place. This paper narrates the story of that subtle change.*

**Key Words:** Earthquake, disaster, affected areas/ communities, ERRA programme review, reconstruction and rehabilitation, authentic sources of information, unanticipated results, societal change.

## 1. Introduction

The evaluation methodologies in fragile conditions caused by natural disasters did not get enough attention till the historic disaster of Indian Ocean tsunami that hit a large area of South Asia region in 2004, affecting millions of people and causing innumerable problems in the aftermath [1]. Similarly, when the massive earthquake hit the northern regions of Pakistan including parts of Kashmir in 2005, there was not enough experience to develop a comprehensive system for programme review at the scale to gauge the performance of reconstruction and rehabilitation programme worth US\$5 billion.

Hence the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) established the Knowledge Management Cell (KMC) to devise evaluation methodologies from collective experience of a six member research team who rolled up their sleeves to undertake the task. It resulted in producing 8 district baseline studies, 2 annual programme reviews and 4 sectoral case studies at the end [2]. This paper is based on personal experiences acquired during the period 2006-2008.

Besides a number of challenges faced at the Head Office, located at the Prime Minister Secretariat, to get through the bureaucratic system and in the field to conduct site visits and engage communities, there were two main concerns at the heart of the KMC team's research and review assignment.

The first concern in programme review was to identify **authentic sources of information** which would not only enrich the data but also provide insights into social issues to make it programmatically and contextually relevant; therefore enhancing the prospect of the programme review being utilized and useful in contributing towards improvement of the programme. One may ask what could be the most authentic and valuable source of information that an evaluator looks for; and the answer is 'people' and their personal experiences. Particularly in humanitarian crisis situation in the aftermath of a disaster, the affected communities, though hard to reach, are the most reliable source of information. They are constantly faced with real life

situations and have to make snap decisions that matter a great deal in their survival with dignity in uncertain, fragile and changing conditions.

The second concern was to identify '**unanticipated results**' [3] beyond the planning and the purview of the programme intervention in the form of social change that may not be obvious in the outset. Some of the indicators of change appear swiftly, while others emerge slowly and in a subtle way. Therefore, a constant look at the social radar is of utmost importance. This happens when evaluators are interacting with community members on regular basis and not just use touch and go approach. The unanticipated results and/or consequences are triggered by social dynamics at a larger scale outside the control and scope of the programme and 'nearly always anecdotal and stumbled upon after the fact' [4]. Smart evaluators have a keen eye for social change while carrying out their routine business.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this narrative is to share the knowledge and experience of conducting the first review of ERRA's reconstruction and rehabilitation programme launched in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake, and to highlight the core lessons learned about using the authentic sources of information and identifying indicators of societal change taking place parallel to but beyond the control of the programme.

## 3. Significance

The paper is written to communicate to the evaluation professionals an important aspect of their undertaking i.e. to look beyond the obvious. There are indicators pointing to unanticipated results, both positive and negative, as the community dynamics change in the aftermath of a disaster in which the normal life takes a drastic turn from peaceful living to a constant struggle to survive and maintain human dignity. Many a times, these indicators are overlooked and the attention is focused on tangible achievements of development (or in this case reconstruction) intervention to claim attribution – a subject being constantly debated among the community of evaluators with no clear and simple criteria to measure and attribute a specific change to a specific intervention. The reason being that the 'causal dimensions of behaviour namely the locus of control, stability, and control' [5] are not strongly present in development/reconstruction interventions due to the range of diverse stakeholders working on multi-faceted programmes in multi-cultural environment in fragile and uncertain conditions.

## 4. Validity and Reliability

The narrative contains qualitative information, ideas and opinions acquired and/or formed on the basis of professional experience, knowledge and observations by the author as the leader of Knowledge Management research team. Facts and

figures are obtained from ERRA's published reports, datasets and official website whereas the inferences and observations are made using the enriching interaction with community members and representatives during site visits of affected areas. All references are provided at the end of the article.

## 5. Description of the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme and the Review Undertaking

On 8 October 2005, a large part of northern Pakistan and Kashmir was jolted by a huge earthquake of an intensity that measured 7.6 on the Richter scale [6], resulting in tremendous loss of life and property, destruction of natural resources and with it means of peoples' livelihoods. According to an estimation of damages provided in the early reports around 73,000 people lost their lives and 130,000 received injuries; among them a significant number of people suffered lifelong disabilities [7]. That later necessitate establishment of specific medical facilities to assist people regain their physical capabilities through prosthetic limbs, support equipment, treatment and therapies.

It was also estimated that some 500 families were directly affected. Overall 3.5 million people within an area of 30000<sup>2</sup> km were said to be affected due to the vast destruction of infrastructure, disruption of public facilities and services including loss of power and telecommunication network and dysfunctional schools, hospitals as well as road and transport infrastructure [8].

The affected districts included Abbottabad, Bagh, Battagram, Kohistan, Mansehra, Muzaffarabad and Neelum Jhelum Valley, Rawalkot and Shangla.

Within a short period following the first emergency intervention, the government established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) to start rebuilding civil infrastructure and rehabilitating communities in the affected regions. The level of planning required access to information prior to earthquake which due to the destruction of government buildings including the district administration were lost in the rubble. However, with the joint efforts of the government and its development partners including the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), an estimation of damages was made.

**5.1. The emergency response continuum** consisted of four phases; in which ERRA's role in phase four was critical to build upon the first three phases for maintaining momentum and sustainability in the long term. These phases were defined as follows:

**Table 1. Phased Response**

Phase 1 Immediate Repose	Efforts were focused on the rescue and relief operation, crisis management, damage control and restoration of basic
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	infrastructure including removing debris from the roads to facilitate transport of goods to distant communities.
Phase 2 Short Term	Response focused on sustaining both displaced population in camps and local population, supplementing local response capacities, reviving civil administration and judicial institutions as well as essential services, such as in health, education, communication, power stations and trade and banking
Phase 3 Medium Term	Early Recovery Operation to normalize public life routines.
Phase 4 Long Term	Reconstruction and Rehabilitation to implement strategic and operational plans of action for rebuilding cities and communities on better, larger and sustainable parameters.

ERRA's programme was by far the most challenging post-crisis undertaking in the country and probably in the south Asia region due to its geographical and socio-economic scope and financial commitment of around US\$ 5 billion made globally to support the government of Pakistan to deal with this massive task of post-disaster rebuilding of cities and communities.

**5.2. The Knowledge Management Cell (KMC)** that was tasked to conduct programme reviews consisted of a team of six professionals that included the Programme Evaluator/Team Leader, four Researchers and the GIS specialist, supported by two external consultants. The team was directly reporting to the CEO to ensure its independence.

**5.3. The methodology** developed by the team was based on multiple techniques to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, conduct analysis and prepare review report as explained in the following paragraphs.

A rigorous and systematic inquiry [9] was carried out, complying with international evaluation criteria of relevance, ownership, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency; additionally maintaining independence, ensuring stakeholders' participation, cultural sensitivity, transparency in reporting and do no-harm principle [10].

According to Results-based Management (RBM) basics [11], the participatory approach was applied to conduct the review 'focusing on performance and achievement of outputs,

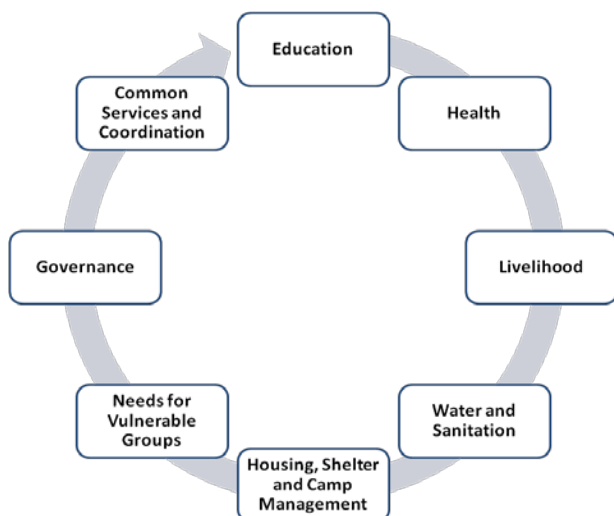
outcomes and impacts' [12]. At the same time, finding out gaps and documenting issues highlighted by stakeholders or observed by researchers. In order to further ensure authenticity of findings, partner civil society organizations and communities were approached to provide direct and unedited input and information.

#### 5.4. The process included:

- In-house collection of data on sectoral progress was facilitated by the computer section and media section.
- Field visits were carried out to directly collect data/information from the sources through semi structured interviews, focus groups, meetings, workshops, site visits and briefings by managers and stakeholders at district level.
- Information was backed by documents, interview notes and/or visual evidence such as photographs and videos.
- ERRA programme managers, executives and relevant district government officers were invited to write their experiences in specific areas of expertise/sectors.
- Stakeholders' engagement throughout the review process [13] was ensured. Stakeholders/Partners in the field were invited to write their experiences and contribute data, information and opinions including recommendations for the improvement of the programme.

The scope of the programme review covered programme implementation and performance in eight major sectors [14] as depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 2. ERRA Programme Scope



Other cross-cutting issues such as equitable social and economic development across districts and populations, child protection, gender equality, and environmental sustainability were kept under watch.

The information was validated by circulating specific chapters to relevant programme managers and the section responsible to maintain official database.

#### 5.5 The report lay out was designed as follows:

**The first part** consisted of the programme overview, immediate response, challenges and programme vision followed by sector specific progress vis a vis its strategy and plan of action including qualitative issues as emerged in the field and noted during the implementation, monitoring and review process. This part also included chapters on core management processes such as ERRA leadership, monitoring and evaluation, sponsorship/partners and financial management.

**The second part** consisted of unedited direct input from stakeholders and partners from civil society and community organizations who reflected upon their experiences and lessons learned.

**The third part** consisted of an overview of financial cost of reconstruction and executive summary of the WB Review Report issued by a multi-disciplinary mission of experts. It was not customary to share the WB Review Missions findings publicly, therefore KMC had to bypass the bureaucratic norms.

#### 6. Programme Review Challenges

Some of the challenges faced by the research team were specific to the various evaluation components and processes. For example:

##### 6.1. Constructing District Baseline was a tough undertaking due to the following challenges:

- **Availability of and Access to data/ information:** Due to the fact that most of the government office building and their record was destroyed in the earthquake, proxy estimation using various secondary sources of data was made by a team to prepare baselines of affected districts.
- **Validity of data:** The team had to travel to remote areas in the affected districts to contact relevant local people including government officers, political leaders, community organizers, entrepreneurs, workers and households to verify various segments of information e.g. number of schools that existed prior to the earthquake and the number needed to be constructed in view of the damages caused by the disaster as well as demographic changes occurred during the last many years and foreseen. Since the last census was conducted some 6 years ago [15], a lot of guess work had to be done.

- **Tabulation and Analysis:** Synchronizing data, designing uniform tables and conducting analysis was difficult due to gaps in data sets and the differing structures of quantitative and qualitative information reported from various primary and secondary sources.

##### 6.2. Likewise the Programme Review process additionally faced a number of difficulties as follows:

- **Scope of Review:** Considering the geographical and social scope, financial outlay, sector diversity and technical

delivery mechanism of the programme, the task was too large to be completed by a team of six professionals without enlisting support of the head office, district offices and stakeholders at the local level.

- **Keeping within the Mandate:** The team was constantly in action, either travelling in the field, meeting people, collecting information, synthesizing, writing and putting everything in perspective. During this activity, the most important apprehension was to avoid mission creep, stay within the mandate and not to go overboard to commit something to people on behalf of the organization or say something outside the policy line. This was peculiar due to fragile conditions and expectations of the people faced with innumerable hardships after the disaster. Every visitor to community was considered a messenger of hope bringing some (good) news.

- **Writing and Synergizing the Review:** The programme review included contribution from various stakeholders complementing the core set of information acquired from the in-house database. The main challenge was to create synergy in the various parts of the report and to ensure consistency.

- **Acceptance of the report:** Some of the colleagues in ERRA who came from hard core bureaucratic background were not fully appreciative of including a segment on the perception of communities based on the contribution from civil society non-profit partner organizations in the field. Only the positive signal from the CEO could save the work of the research team.

- **Publishing of the Review:** Working with the printers was another challenge as staff at the printing house was not familiar with technical terminology used in the review, and the research team had to work 24 hours 7 days a week with them to ensure accurate and timely production. The proof reading and editing consumed a lot of time and efforts.

**6.3 The compiling of Thematic Case Studies** was organized differently. For the purpose of developing and compiling case studies, an international expert was engaged who was provided access to information and to communities for collecting and synthesizing information. There were no major challenges except that the progress was slow and there was not sufficient evidence to demonstrate significant achievements. However, the case studies also contributed to the research experience of ERRA.

## 7. Identifying Unanticipated Results

As we mentioned earlier, the KMC team was not just looking at the programme progress, performance and achievements, but also keeping an eye on the social radar to identify any unexpected change in communities in the affected districts.

It is to be clarified in the outset that the forthcoming observations on societal change could not be systematically attributed or considered attributable to the ERRA programme

due to absence of evidence. The KMC neither had the mandate nor the tools to monitor and assess the change process with some kind of authority. The team only experienced and observed the vibes coming from the communities during their interaction. However, the disaster itself brought about a major change in situation on the ground, causing chain of events to take place in its aftermath. ERRA programme could have been one of the links in the chain.

In retrospect, the author recollects some of the observations below.

- We noted instances where the local population was overwhelmed and exhausted by the frequent and in some cases almost non-stop visits of national and international partners/workers engaged in a range of activities from raising funds to providing technical support and/or direct inputs into the programme operations.

- The programme sites where the reconstruction and rehabilitation work was being undertaken fell short of accommodation due to presence of a large number of non-local residents such as the programme implementing staff, building companies and non-profit charity organizations' workers and high profile visitors.

- This demographic change due to inter-district mobility also seemed to boost inflationary trends in the prices of commodities, housing and rents.

- With the change in the balance of urban-rural population, the socio-economic disparities became more prominent.

- The use of vehicles, especially heavy duty vehicles to transport supplies was another nuisance to the once peaceful environment.

On the other hand, there were indicators of change in the positive direction that could not be captured through data analysis, but needed an eye for subtlety, depth and detail.

- The level of social awareness among affected population went up, especially among rural masses who became conscious of their socio-economic, cultural, civil and political rights and started to demand better performance from their public representatives and local government authorities responsible to provide facilities and services;

- Communities came forward to share their views and actively participate in the planning and implementation of reconstruction and rehabilitation plans in their localities, also monitor the work progress and send out complaints to ERRA's call centres;

- The solidarity among various communities started to take place as they learned to appreciate the fact that despite being geographically segregated they were collectively faced with the same challenges as victims of natural disaster; hence cross-regional informal dialogue on the distribution of resources among districts became an important subject.



- Following each other's example, local community leadership raised demands for funds to construct new schools, hospitals, roads, parks and other civil infrastructure even if it was non-existing prior to the earthquake. Small districts like Shangla, Kohistan and Neelum-Jhelum Valley keenly pursued development ambitions.
  - The understanding about Child Rights and Women's Right and Gender Equality/Equity was created in both rural and urban societies during the response process in the wake of partnership with UN and national and International non-profit organizations. CRC [16] and CEDAW [17] became household words. There were many factors to steer this change, but the strongest factor was the community's own realization that in crisis, some groups of population have special needs that had to be addressed on communal basis to maintain synergies in social fabric.
  - It made a strong case for child protection and women protection in particular young girls who were forced out of their protective home turf to participate in rebuilding process. Their potential to contribute both physically and socially was tremendous, given the fact that most of them were educated but did not have the opportunity to apply their education earlier beyond household level. It included taking part in camp activities such as participating in rehabilitation process including care for the elderly, weak and needy, carry out essential tasks such as camp-based community cooking, cleaning, minding babies, tending plants, working as nurses and teachers, coordinating and communicating with relief and reconstruction staff, distributing and managing commodities, organizing children and women focus groups, and filling out forms to help other folks around.
  - Environment got a boost as public understanding on how to protect environment grew, leading to better building construction, maintaining trees and creating green areas as well as avoiding littering vicinity with waste. Many a lessons in hygiene in domestic and public life were learned and applied in the process.
  - There was a unique wave of shifting means of livelihoods from elementary to comparatively better skilled and professional jobs and careers. Youth in particular benefitted by joining rebuilding process in various capacities at local level. It might have improved the local unemployment rate, wages and household income; however, there was no systematic study to validate the assumption.
  - Youth's language skills came in handy during interaction with national and international actors as the affected regions sustained for centuries many diverse cultures and languages from Kohistan to Muzaffabad including Sereiki, Punjabi, Pushto and Kashmiri.
- Two more phenomena were observed by the research team. Both appeared extremely important and interesting. First was the 'freedom of expression' [18] as the community

representatives and members spoke out about the work progress, performance and relevance to their emerging needs. Leaving the past aside, they started to influence the implementation of the rebuilding plans. The second was the mobility in and around the locality with the removal of debris and reclaiming of space during reconstruction of infrastructure. The availability of funds made it easy for people to find new locations to rebuild better accommodation instead of repairing old and damaged family houses.

- The physical infrastructure, government buildings, communication network, electricity, water and sanitation, and the social infrastructure of schools, hospitals, sports and leisure facilities was set to improve as part of the national plan, however, the maintenance and utilization was very much the local affair and community responsibility which was slowly emerging on the scene.

Having shared our observations, what we now propose to the authorities is to conduct a systematic evidence-based evaluation of post disaster societal change to ensure that the information is documented and shared for use in the future.

## 8. Lessons Drawn

Two main lessons were drawn from the said experience as follows:

- i. Without the input and cooperation from social actors from among the communities, it was not possible to have a comprehensive overview of the progress and/or the shortfall of reconstruction and rehabilitation work in the earthquake affected districts. Although, there were concerns among the bureaucracy about including voices from the social actors in the Annual Programme Review document, yet the KMC research team working under the supervision of ERRa CEO was convinced that it would bring much credibility to their work. Hence our advice to the young development professionals is to reach out to communities and benefit from their direct feedback, insight and even criticism.
- ii. Development programme managers, researchers, monitors and evaluators have the unique privilege to access communities and interact with people at the centre of activity. Our advice is to keep your mind open and use this privilege to observe indicators beyond the scope of the programme or the evaluation assignment. You will be surprised what you stumble on.

In conclusion, we share the following quote taken from an article titled 'Making Sense of Results: Unanticipated Results and Outcomes' that explains it too well.

'Throughout the planning process, remain aware of potential unanticipated effects of the process or data you collect, and talk about what they might mean for the program, staff, service participants, and other stakeholders. Early conversations with stakeholders and participants could generate a list of **possible outcomes and consequences of asking** questions and collecting data. This list won't hold all

## 9. Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ERRA	Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
GIS	Geographical Information System
KMC	Knowledge Management Cell
RBM	Results-Based Management
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank

**Attribution:** The estimation of the extent to which any results observed are caused by the programme, meaning that the programme has produced incremental effects [20].

**Base-line study:** An analysis describing the situation prior to a development intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made.

**Case Study:** The collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group (*communities*), frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves [21].

**Indicator:** Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor [22].

**Evaluation:** The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or program. An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, on-going, or completed

development intervention. Note: Evaluation in some instances involves the definition of appropriate standards, the examination of performance against those standards, an assessment of actual and expected results and the identification of relevant lessons [23].

**Review:** An assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad hoc basis. Note: Frequently “evaluation” is used for a more comprehensive and/or more in-depth assessment than “review”. Reviews tend to emphasize operational aspects. Sometimes the terms “review” and “evaluation” are used as synonyms. Related term: evaluation [24].

**Results-Based Management (RBM):** A management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts. Related term: logical framework [25].

**Unanticipated Results / Unexpected Outcomes:** Unexpected Outcomes in Development and Democracy The techniques to be advocated are particularly relevant in development settings because programs in those contexts are extremely prone to outcomes that were not anticipated by planners and policy makers. This uncertainty exists because development programs often involve rich, tight linkages that affect many aspects of the systems in which they reside, and also because the environments in which they exist can be unstable [26].

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